EVA

HATTIE WELLER WORDEN

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Yours Sincerely
Hattie Keller Worden

EVA.

A NOVEL.

BY

HATTIE WELLER WORDEN

AUTHOR OF EDNA LEE.

LILY DALE, N. Y.
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TO MY

HUSBAND

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED.

EVA.

CHAPTER I.

It had once been a fine old place, but Time's relentless fingers had left their impress upon it. For fourteen years it had been unoccupied save for the four-footed tenants which had taken up their abode within its walls, at their own sweet will, their possession disputed only by bats and a few of the feathered tribe which occasionally entered through the broken windows.

The walls were thickly overgrown with vines; the grounds which had once been beautiful with flowers and rustic arbors were now choked with tall weeds, grass had grown in the gravel walks and drives, and the fountains which once had plashed and played were filled up with the debris of leaves, branches, sticks and stones.

The boys in the village on the outskirts of which this old mansion stood had been the worst depredators, for they had broken the glass out of most of the windows, the branches of every fruit tree on the premises had suffered at their hands, they

had thrown stones into the basins of the fountains, broken down the rustic arbors, drained the water off the little fish pond in the grounds at the back of the mansion, and then as though not content with all that work of devastation, had, as though wishing to add insult to injury, put up a board at the entrance gates on which was painted in great black letters the one word, "Haunted." The rosy glow of the dying day was tingeing the vine covered walls, and lighting up the few windows in the upper stories which had escaped the bombardment of stones, and in the sunset coloring this old ruined home seemed to smile a sad, hopeless smile as though in memory of vanished joys and days departed, of resignation to the inevitable.

So thought a solitary horseman who had drawn up at the gateway as he looked up at the great house and over the grounds, and as his wandering gaze took in the whole scene he said aloud: "What is more pathetic than an old deserted home?" Then as his eyes rested on the board which had been painted with the suggestive word he smiled and patted his horse on the neck. "Well, Rocket, this grows interesting, and as we have not money enough to put up at the village hotel we may have to pass the night among the ghosts, eh, old boy? This is what comes of giving one's last cent to a wayfarer, and not calculating correctly the length of one's journey. Never mind, old boy, we will see what kind of a place this is. I don't believe you are very superstitious, and I am sure I am not, so perhaps this place will do as well as a hostelry.

I don't care so much on my own account as on yours, for you have come a long distance, and you shall have your supper and lodging if your master goes without his. We will manage it in some way."

He turned in at the gate and followed the drive which led around to the rear of the mansion, hoping to find a stable of some kind, but he saw only the remains of one, which, to judge by appearances, had been destroyed by fire many years before.

"Well, Rocket, things begin to look serious," he said, gazing about him with a perplexed look. He thrust his hands down deep in his pockets, when an expression of pleased surprise overspread his face. He drew up one hand with a half-dollar between the fingers. "I did not know I had that," he said. "Well, old boy, that will pay for your bed and supper at the village hotel barn, and I don't care so much for myself. I will put you up at the village public house, and I can come and put up at the haunted house. It will be a shelter at any rate, and the next time we go on a pilgrimage we won't give our money all away to the first beggar we chance to meet until we find out how long we must be on the road."

Turning about he rode slowly out of the grounds, and the tired horse turned reluctantly into the highway again, and, a little farther on they entered the village of Greendell and drew up at the inn. It was a new and not a pleasant experience to Ernest Grayland to be obliged to ask the price of a night's lodging for his horse, but he did it

with as good a grace as possible, and found to his relief that Rocket's supper, bed and breakfast at the village hostelry would be just half a dollar. He paid it in advance, and telling the man that he would be there by seven the next morning he left the stable and turned his steps in the direction of the haunted house.

The prospect was not a pleasant one. He was a stranger in a strange place. He had started from home in response to a summons from an entire stranger who requested him in a letter which had been brought to him by a boy, to come out to a camp of Gypsies where the writer was lying ill without hope of recovery, and hear a confession which was of vital importance to the living, and to come alone. He had started as soon as he could get ready, and, refusing his valet's urgent request to be allowed to accompany him, set out upon his journey on his favorite horse.

He listened to his man, however, when, just as he was about to start he begged him not to take much money and no valuables with him, and laughingly handed over his watch which was a very fine one, and every article of value which he had upon his person. Then taking his pocketbook he extracted from it three five dollar bills and handed the book over also, to the man's great relief, for he did not want his young master to go alone on a journey to a Gypsy camp with anything which would make a too tempting display.

The distance was only thirty miles, and Ernest fully expected to return within twenty-four hours from the time of his departure from home.

On the way he had come upon a man who was so hopelessly crippled that the sight of his helplessness had appealed so strongly to his sympathies that he had given him the three five dollar bills thinking they were all the money he had with him, but supposing he would soon be at the Gypsy camp he did not expect to be placed in any circumstances which would require any money.

It was after this that he discovered he had taken the wrong road and gone miles out of his way, and in retracing his steps he had found that night was near at hand and his horse weary, while he was still some miles from his destination. It was then that he had come in sight of the village of Greendell, on the outskirts of which he had come upon the haunted house. It had occurred to him that this would be a shelter, that it would be but for one night anyway. He did not wish to telegraph home for money, and as the weather was warm he would much prefer staying there to asking a night's lodging of strangers. He would rather go without his own supper than ask for it, so he turned for the second time into the grounds and approached the front entrance to the haunted house.

He walked up the stone steps and tried the massive front doors, but they resisted all his efforts. He went around the house looking for an opening and found one. A door which had once been of glass and which opened on a small balcony reached by half a dozen stone steps, had suffered from the vigorous attacks of the village boys until not only

the glass had been broken out, but the doorframe itself had been almost demolished. He entered through this and found himself in a large room with high ceiling. A few articles of motheaten furniture and some torn and faded curtains still occupied it. There was a large fireplace, and over the black marble mantel still hung the portrait of a young and exquisitely beautiful woman.

Through an archway he could see a large hall in which a grand stairway ascended to the upper part of the house. He went up this to the top and glanced about, but the upper hall was empty, and the doors opening off from it were the doors to what had once been the sleeping rooms, and as he thought he would rather be on the lower floor, he descended to the room he had first entered, and where there was an old couch upon which he thought he would make his bed for the night. He looked in the rooms on the lower floor but in none of the others was there so much furniture as in this one, so here he decided to stay. "If the ghosts will permit me," he said smiling.

He stood for some time looking at the pictured face that smiled down upon him from above the fireplace. The eyes of this portrait seemed to follow him, for wherever he stood in the room they looked directly at him with a smile half proud, half mischevious but very sweet. The face showed high breeding in every line, and in the poise of the head a dignity of bearing, that together with its beauty and merry sweetness made it irresistible.

"If it is the ghost of the original of that picture

that haunts this house I hope she will pay me a visit tonight," said Ernest, "for I should be happy to make the acquaintance of so charming a lady. I suppose there has been a tragedy here at some time or other, and that is why this fine old place has gone to rack and ruin. In accordance with what I have always read of haunted houses there ought to be a bloodstain about here somewhere on the wall or floor. I think I will look around a little more. I suppose this beautiful woman was murdered by a jealous husband or lover, as such stories usually run, and her spirit still holds nightly revels within these walls re-enacting the original tragedy.

"I never could understand how a man could allow his common sense to become so blinded by jealousy as to cause him to commit murder. If a woman whom I loved turned from me to some other man and bestowed her favors and affections upon him, I believe I should ask myself whether or not the fault was mine. At least I think I should infer, from her desertion of me, that I was not the most charming male creature of the century, and come to the conclusion that 'there were others,' and that possibly some other man might be more worthy of her love than I, and she had discernment enough to see it. But I never saw a jealous beast who was not so full of egotism that he could not see any fault in himself, and if everyone else did not admire him, thought they were doing him a personal injury. I like that woman's face, and it strikes me that a man would have to be

above the ordinary to win and hold her affections."

He went slowly up the stairs again and looked into the sleeping-rooms on the second floor. In some of them the beds and bedding, carpets, curtains and even some of the toilet articles were still in their places, but musty and dusty and moth-eaten to the last degree. In one room which was finer than the others was a little lace draped crib with the soft pillows and coverings still occupying it. But although he made a pretty thorough search no bloodstain was to be seen.

As he turned to leave this chamber he glanced up and saw written upon the wall above the door the words "This is the ghost-room."

"So this is where the ghost makes its headquarters," he said to himself. "Well, if it was not so dusty and musty I would stay in here, but the air is better down below, so I think I'll go down."

He went back to the room below and drawing the old couch into a position where he could see through the archway into the hall, and also a portion of the staircase, he lay down upon it and prepared to rest and sleep. For Ernest Grayland had met with strange experiences in many different lands, and therefore was in the habit of making the best of worse situations than this. He was absolutely devoid of superstitious fear, and he expected to sleep, and sleep well in this gruesome place which had every appearance of having been darkened by sorrow and crime.

As the light of day faded, and everything in the room grew dim and indistinct the last to fade

into the dusk was the beautiful face, which stood out like a fine cameo against the dark wall and smiled down upon him until the growing darkness shut it from his sight.

The house was silent as the grave; a drowsiness came over him and he dropped into a deep dreamless sleep. After a time the moon rose and flooded the whole place with its soft rays, and as it climbed higher in the heavens it shone in at the window and on the couch where the sleeper lay, with one arm under his head and his handsome face upturned and illumined by the silvery light.

CHAPTER II.

In an unpretentious little cottage in the village of Greendell Lucinda Nayburn was beginning her preparations for supper. Lucinda was not fair, but she was fat and over forty, with a figure like a dumpling; her waist line defined only by her apron strings, which made her look—her husband said—"like a bag tied in the middle." Her face was fat, and her brown eyes dull and expressionless, and her hair which was thin and straight, was drawn tightly back from her forehead and temples and twisted into a little knot on the top of her head, which knot her husband jokingly termed "Cindy's knob."

It was scarcely five o'clock, but she was bustling about, putting the tea-kettle on, and making frequent trips to the pantry, while her husband sat by a window reading a newspaper, and a lovely girl of about eighteen was engaged likewise with a book. Presently she halted before her husband, placed her hands on her hips and in a fretful voice began: "Ely Nayburn I wish you'd take your nose out of that paper, and pay attention to me."

"What is it now, Cindy?" he asked without raising his eyes from the printed page.

"I want you to go down to the meat-market and git sumthin' to fry fer supper. I'm so sick an' tired of eggs I don't never want to see another in all my life." Ely Nayburn laid down his paper, rather reluctantly, and prepared to do as she requested.

"What shall I get, Cindy?" he asked, pausing in the doorway.

"Oh, I don't know. Git what you please, but do hurry, and don't stand an' gab with every woman you see."

"That will depend on how good looking she may be," replied Ely, with a twinkle in his eyes. "If any good looking woman wants to talk to me, I'm as ready to talk as she is."

"I guess everybody in this place knows that, and they all feel sorry fer me. Don't they Jessamine?"

The girl smiled. She was accustomed to this sort of thing between these two.

"Don't expect me to take sides, please," she said, "for it is safer for me to be on the good side of you both. I don't think you need any assistance from anyone, Aunt Cindy. You can hold your own well enough."

"I shall try to anyhow," snapped Cindy.

After Ely had gone on his errand Jessamine laid down her book, and said abruptly: "Aunt Cindy, you have never told me the story of the "Haunted House" and I have asked you about it every time I have been here on a visit, but you always put me off. Won't you tell me about it?"

"No," replied Cindy with apparent firmness, "I never shall."

"But why?" persisted Jessamine. "What harm could there be in your telling me what gave it such a name?"

"I don't believe in tellin' young girls things that'll scare 'em half to death," replied Cindy gravely.

Jessamine laughed merrily. "Why, Aunt Cindy," she cried, "I would no more think of being frightened than I would be at a fairy story. I asked Uncle Ely why it was that I could never persuade you to tell me about it, and he said you did not know as much about it as he did, and that he would tell me the whole story sometime."

Cindy stopped short and looked at Jessamine, with anger in her dull brown eyes. He told you I didn't know, did he? The self-conceited old fool! Wal, I know more about it than he ever did, and I'll tell you the story as it happened, fer I was here in Greendell at the time, an' knew all about it."

Jessamine turned to the window to hide a smile of triumph at the success of her little ruse, for she understood Cindy's nature well enough to know that a word of opposition from Ely would arouse every particle of contrariness she possessed.

"Then the house is really supposed to be haunted?" she asked, after she had her countenance well under control.

"I hope you don't believe no such nonsense as that," said Cindy sharply.

"Don't you believe in ghosts, Aunt Cindy?" asked the girl innocently.

"I hope I've got more sense than to believe in any such foolishness as that."

"Then we might go over the 'haunted house' sometime, and look at the whole place," said Jessamine eagerly. "You will go with me, won't you? I should like to see it."

Cindy stopped in the pantry doorway and looked at the girl with horrified eyes. Then she gave a little gasp. "Jessamine Erlwin" she said, in an awe-stricken voice, "I wouldn't go into that house nor onto them premises even in broad daylight if anybody would give me the biggest farm within twenty miles of Greendell, and I like property just as well as anybody."

"But I thought you said you didn't believe in ghosts," said the girl, trying to keep from laughing outright.

"I don't."

"Then what are you afraid of?"

"You don't know what you might see before you got out of there."

"But one can't see a ghost if there isn't any such thing."

"You don't know what you are talking about, dear," said Cindy, dropping her voice to a soothing tone as though reasoning with a small child.

"Well, tell me what happened there," said Jessamine, "and then I shall understand it better."

"Wal," said Cindy, dropping into a chair, "I can't do no more toward gittin' supper till that man comes, if he ever does.

"That haunted house used to be the grandest place that was ever seen around here. It belonged to an awful rich man, and he was handsome as a

picture, too. But he used to spend his winters in the city. He would come out here summers and bring a lot of fashionable company with him, and then for a few weeks there would be great doin's up there. These folks he brought home with him wa'n't like the folks around here. They dressed perfectly magnificent, and they was all the time ridin' an' drivin,' and dancin' and some of the women was too stuck up to even look at us poor common folks. Wal, about six miles from here is a place in the woods where most every summer some Gypsies camp for a while, but they never had done nobody no harm so they wasn't meddled with. Wal, these high an' mighty folks wanted to get their fortunes told, so they all rode out to the camp one day, and while they was there, a young Gipsy girl fell dead in love with the master of the house. She made a perfect fool of herself about him, and land sakes! he wouldn't think of lookin at her.

"You wouldn't believe that any girl would ever follow a man about and worship him the way she did. Some folks blamed him and suspected that he encouraged her on the sly, but I don't know, I don't hardly believe he did, though some men are mean enough to do most anything. But one reason why I think he didn't is because I flirted my handkerchief at him one day when he was ridin' past, and I was a pretty girl then if I do say it, for that was nineteen years ago, and he give me such a look I never felt so ashamed of myself in all my life. So I don't believe he ever encouraged

any poor Gypsy girl, fer he acted as if he thought a crowned queen wouldn't be none too good fer him.

"Wall, after a while he got married, and his wife was a beauty an' no mistake and the poor Gipsy girl was desperate. Don't you think, dear, that a woman is a big fool to love a man like that, when he don't care no more fer her than he does fer the dirt in the road?"

"I think she is to be pitied," said Jessamine gently, "I cannot think of anything much more pathetic. We know that she would not be a victim to such an infatuation if she could help it, Aunt Cindy. We know that such infatuations do exist, and they seem to be as uncontrollable as they are unaccountable. We should be careful how we judge."

"I don't know nothin about what she could help or couldn't," said Cindy sharply, "but I know she was a fool or she wouldn't allow herself to be such a softy. Wal, she almost went crazy, and the first summer that he brought his wife and baby out here she hung around the place, and one night when there was a big thunder storm, and his wife was standin' at the window watchin' the storm, the Gypsy girl crept up near the house and shot an' killed her. She fell and died right where she had been standin'.

"Of course the help and everybody on the place was scart half to death, and in the excitement and confusion of attending to the mistress an' tryin' to bring her to life again, they never thought

of the baby and left it alone a few minutes, and the Gypsy girl got into the house an' stole the baby right out of its cradle and carried it off.

"The next mornin' they got a letter from the Gypsy girl and when the master of the house read it he just dropped right down, and the doctors called it heart failure, fur that night he was dead. So they had a double funeral and buried husband and wife side by side in the family tomb.

"You see that letter is what killed the man, comin' as it did right after the other horror, fer in the letter she told him that she had killed his wife an' carried off his child, and had just killed it, strangled it with her own hands, and buried it in the woods where he would never find it, and she was goin' to kill herself as soon as she finished the letter—she had the poison all ready—so he never could track her down an' punish her, and finished by askin' him if he thought it was a safe thing to do to scorn a Gypsy's love.

"Oh! it was an awful letter! It was enough to kill anybody, and the nurse almost died too, when she read it. You see the child was a little over a year old, and they was all so fond of it that they would have felt just awful if it had died at home while bein' surrounded by every care. But then to have it took out of its cradle and carried off to the woods and strangled—why it was enough to make the arch-fiend himself shed tears.

"Wal, after the funeral and everything was all over with, his brother come. They sent for him as soon as they thought of it, and he, bein' in

Europe, it took him some time to git here, an' when he did come he just told the nurse and her husband that if they would move into the little house near the western gates and work what land they wanted, they might have the use of it free of charge till he come again or till they heard from him. He was the nearest relative, so the place belonged to him now, and he was so terribly shocked and horrified by the awful murders that he said he couldn't bear to stay there a minute longer than he had to, so he went back across the sea, and left the place in charge of the nurse and her husband, and they have never heard a word from him since. So they live there yet, and work part of the land, and they have left the big house just as it was. The furniture and curtains and all that was there is rotting away except what has been stolen and what the nurse moved into the cottage for her own use.

"Most likely more of it would have been stolen if anybody had dared to steal in such a place, but after it got the name of bein' haunted, folks give it a wide berth. Even the village boys don't dare go there at night, but in the daytime they aint afraid."

"But in what way is it haunted?" asked Jessamine. "What have people seen to make them think it is haunted?"

"Wal, they've seen lights movin' about inside the house, and a woman's form all in white standin' in the window where the mistress stood when the Gypsy girl shot her, and they say that a big pic-

ture of her that hangs over one of the fireplaces is sometimes all glowin', all lighted up and shines in the dark. Some boys went in there one night and was goin' to make themselves to home, and when they come into that room there was that picture all shinin' with a kind of blue light, an' the rest of the room pitch dark. Wal, now, I guess them boys got out of there in double quick time, and they didn't want to try that again. Why, I wouldn't go near that place after nightfall fer anything anybody would offer me, and I don't believe in ghosts neither." Cindy concluded with her usual inconsistency.

Jessamine smiled. "It must have been a fine place in the days of its glory," she said, "I should like to have seen it as it was then."

"Oh, I tell you it was just grand," replied Cindy, her dull eyes kindling into something like enthusiasm. "I was all through there once, and it was so big an' so fine. You can't git no idea of it by just lookin' at the outside of it. As I told Ely when we went to Niagary Falls, you can't git no idea of 'em by just standin' around an' lookin' at 'em and Ely says, 'What would you do, Cindy? What would you advise anybody to do to git an idea of 'em? Would you have 'em go over the cataract or down through the whirlpool rapids?' Ely thinks he's awful smart, but he's perfectly silly sometimes. He knew we couldn't go down through 'em."

"Thank you very much, Aunt Cindy, for telling me the story. It is very interesting, but you did

not tell me the name of the man who used to be master of the place," said Jessamine.

"His name was Grayland," replied Cindy, "and he called the place 'Arcadia.' It used to have flowers everywhere, and rustic seats and arbors, and the prettiest fountains and little shady nooks and corners, and there was a place they called the 'Fairy Grotto.' It was a sort of a cave in the high bank by the brook, and he had it all fixed up to look beautiful. There was a small fish pond that was full of live fish, and a great barn, big enough to hold forty horses.

"There used to be lots of marble statues in the grounds, and they was awful expensive, but I don't approve of no naked figures. I like statues well enough if they have some kind of a garment made on 'em, but these hadn't, and I think that is downright immodest if it is fashionable and costly. The nurse and her husband had the statues all moved into a room in their cottage, after the boys begun to spoil all the pretty places, for fear they would break 'em by throwin' stones at 'em, and now everything about the place has gone to rack and ruin. You can't realize what it was in the old days."

"It has a grand look still," said Jessamine dreamily. "I know of a family by the name of Grayland. I wonder if they are some of the same race. What was the baby, a boy or a girl?"

"It was a girl. The sweetest little angel you ever see, with dark blue eyes an' golden curls, and always smilin' and happy. I never see it but twice,

and that was when it was out with the nurse. They called it "Evangeline," and the nurse—Mrs. Prayton— mourns for that baby yet. Some folks think she's a little 'out' on account of it. She worshipped it, and she talks queer about it yet. She has been heard to say that she did not believe it was dead, and that it would come back to the old home some day. She says she sees its mother often in her dreams, and she tells her always that the child is living and will come back to her. But that is just a crazy notion she has got into her head on account of broodin' over it so much.

"Everybody here in Greendell thinks she's kind of loony because one day when our minister, Rev. Mr. Pheelbad, went to call on her, tried to labor with her about it for her own good, and told her that it was a sin for her to worship the child, and that he hadn't a doubt but what it was taken away from her as a punishment to her for not worshippin' God instead, and it made him feel bad to see folks lay up treasure on earth, and he thought like as not the parents of the child were allowed to be killed as a judgment upon 'em fer bein' so rich. Why, Jessamine, that woman was so mad she turned Brother Pheelbad out of doors. She didn't say nothin. She just walked to the door, opened it and turned and looked at Brother Pheelbad with her eyes blazin' an' pointed out with her finger and the minister went."

Jessamine barely suppressed a smile. "Was there any doubt about the baby's death?" she asked.

"I think it is the most interesting thing I ever heard."

"Good land! no," replied Cindy. "The Gypsy girl, after her awful crime, went back to the camp and went to her tent an' took the poison just as she wrote to him she should, and she died, and the Gypsies buried her, and they hadn't seen no sign of the child havin' been there. So she must have done as she said in the letter she did; strangled it and buried it somewhere in the woods before she went back to the camp.

"I tell you them Gypsies made themselves scarce for a good while after that. It was as much as five years before any of 'em dared come there again. But you know how such things die down after a while. Now they come there every summer just as they used to. There wasn't any proof at all against the rest of 'em. I don't believe they had anything to do with it. It was all her wicked revengeful doin's because she couldn't have that man. And what kind of a wife would she have been for such a haughty high-toned feller as he was? Some women haint got a particle of sense. Sometimes I feel ashamed of my own sex," concluded Cindy with a sigh.

"Don't you think it strange that the brother—the present owner of the place—never comes to do anything about it? I should think he would either fix it up or sell it. Will it remain in this dilapidated condition always or until it falls down?" asked Jessamine.

"Wal, you see this Mr. Grayland is not like his

brother. The one that died was a great man for gaiety and society, but this one is what they call an Egyptologist. He spends most of his time in Egypt, pokin' around old tombs and mummies, a tryin' to read them old hieroglyphics, though what anybody can see in them to enjoy is more than I know. I would just as soon be buried alive, and rather in a good respectable cemetery, than be diggin' into them old tombs, and unwrappin' them old mummies, when nobody knows what they might have died of. I should be afraid of catchin' some disease."

"Is he rich?" asked Jessamine.

"Oh, my, yes. He don't know how much he is worth, they say. So you see he don't need this place any more than a toad needs a haircomb."

"I see," said Jessamine, and the place may stand as it is indefinitely. I believe it is the same family of Graylands who live in our city. They are great travelers and seldom come home. I have never made their acquaintance, but I have always heard them highly spoken of. Here comes Uncle Ely."

Ely Nayburn came in humming a popular air. He had a June rose in his buttonhole and when Cindy saw it she gave a little gasp. Where did you git that, Ely?" she asked sharply.

"A fine looking lady gave it to me," he answered. "Here is your meat;" handing her a brown parcel.

Cindy's dull eyes glowed with anger. "I know where you got it. You can't fool me," she said.

"I have no desire to 'fool' you," he said, with

provoking unconcern, "I got it where everyone else in Greendell gets their meat—at the meat-market of course. You did not suppose I got it at the blacksmith's, did you, Cindy?"

"I mean the rose," snapped Cindy. "You know perfectly well what I mean, Ely Nayburn. You are the meanest man I ever see in all my life."

"You have told me that so many times, Cindy, that I am rather inclined to believe it," he said, with a short laugh. "If I am not yet deserving of the title I will do my best to earn it. I will have the game if I am to have the name."

"If you two keep on quarrelling I shall have to be a witness in a divorce case yet," said Jessamine, interrupting them. "Don't you see, Aunt Cindy, that it is one of your own roses? One off that bush out by the sidewalk."

Cindy looked a little mollified at this, but she answered with asperity: "I knew it all the time, but he had no business to pick it. I want my roses on the bushes and I don't want 'em meddled with."

She went into the pantry, and Jessamine, taking advantage of her temporary absence, said: "You ought not to tease her so, Uncle Ely."

"She should not nag me all the time, then, and be so suspicious of me every time I am out of her sight. I tell you, Jessamine, it gets monotonous. Better men than I am have grown tired of perpetual faultfinding."

Cindy's reappearance just then put an end to their conversation. As they gathered around the

supper table Ely Nayburn turned to Jessamine with a twinkle of mischief in his fine eyes. "When I was down to the store tonight I saw Mrs. Lexington," he said, "and she told me she wished you could go and stay with Cecil tonight, as she and Lexington were going to see a sick relative, and Cecil would be alone except for the hired help and Tom. But"—with a side glance at Cindy—"you had better not try to go up there tonight, Jessamine, for it looks to me as though a storm is brewing, and I would rather you should be here in that case."

"Don't pay any 'tention to his weather prophesies," snapped Cindy, with a look of deep disgust. "He is the worst old fogy I ever see in all my life. You can go just as well as not if you want to. Ely Nayburn never thinks but what you or anybody else would be perfectly content and satisfied with his delightful society forever; but I know that young girls like you and Cecil like to be in each other's company. So if you would like to go up there tonight, you may go."

"Thank you, Aunt Cindy," said Jessamine, sweetly, "I would like to go if Uncle Ely did not object, but"—she hesitated and glanced toward him questioningly.

"Oh, go if you like, of course," he said carelessly, "but if a storm comes up you will think of what I have said."

"What if a storm did come up," cried Cindy, turning upon him fiercely, "wouldn't she be as safe there as she would be here in the house with you?

What would you ever do to save anybody if the hull house blew down? You'd save your own neck if you saved anybody's. You're the biggest coward I ever see in all my life, Ely Nayburn."

"Thanks," he replied coolly, "your candor is only equalled by your beauty, Cindy." Then turning to Jessamine who had been looking very demurely at her plate he said: "There is a stranger in town, tonight, and a mighty handsome looking chap he is too. He rode up to the hotel, and left his horse, and I heard him tell the landlord that he would come for it in the morning, so I suppose he is stopping with someone in the village, for he certainly did not stay at the hotel nor even go in to supper."

"Do you have any idea who he is or where he went?" asked Cindy. "Did you ever see him before?"

"No," he replied, "I can't say that I have ever seen him before, anywhere, and yet his face was kind of familiar. I can't remember where I have seen a face like his, but he is like someone I have known. I did not ask him where he was going, nor what his business was, nor how long he intended to stay around Greendell, but I haven't a doubt but that you would, if you had been there, Cindy."

Cindy's only reply was a snort of disgust as she rose from the table, and Jessamine began her preparations to depart for the house of her girl friend. As she passed her uncle, she placed her fingers on his arm, and giving it a little pressure, murmured

the one word, "thanks." Their eyes met and a mischevious smile was exchanged, as he whispered: "It is all in knowing how to manage her—her contrariness you know."

"I know," said Jessamine, "I could not have gone up there tonight if it had not been for you."

"What did you say, Ely?" asked Cindy, suspiciously, coming out of the pantry.

"I said I thought it was going to rain," he replied, turning a grave face to her as Jessamine left the room to get her hat.

CHAPTER III.

The Lexington farm was just beyond the border of the little village, and the road Jessamine took led past the "haunted house." She glanced curiously at the place as she passed it, her thoughts reverting to the story which she had just heard in regard to it. The rosy glow of sunset was fast deepening into the violet shades of twilight, and the loneliness of the place and something of its past grandeur thrilled her heart with a feeling of sadness. A fascination she could not account for; a yearning to explore the premises took possession of her. "Some day I will come here and go through the grounds and all over the house from garret to cellar if I have to come all alone," she said to herself as she turned and looked back at it, and then hurried on her way.

She found her friend, Cecil Lexington, sitting out on the front porch. She rose with an exclamation of pleasure and came down the steps to meet her, greeting her warmly.

"I am so glad you could come," she said, "and I will have Sarah put another bed in my room so you can be near me, and we can talk all night if we want to."

Jessamine expressed herself as though pleased with the arrangement. "Only don't put yourself to any trouble on my account, please," she added sweetly.

"Oh, it is no trouble. I am delighted to think I can have you," answered Cecil, and excusing herself she hurried to the kitchen where the little maid of all work was beginning to light the lamps. She looked up at Cecil with an expression of dislike and dread in her eyes. Cecil spoke in a low sharp tone. "I want you to put up a bed in my room for Miss Erlwin, so that she can be with me tonight," she said, "and do it at once so that we can retire as soon as we feel inclined."

"But I am so tired and the spare room is in perfect order," began the girl with a weary sigh; but Cecil cut her short. "I told you I wanted her in my room," she said, haughtily.

"Then why can't she sleep with you? Your bed is big enough for four," said the girl.

"Because millionaire's daughters are accustomed to having a whole bed to themselves," replied Cecil. "I would not think of asking her to share my bed. I don't want to hear any more complaints from you. If you can't put the bed in there alone, then call Job to help you. It seems to me that you are always tired if there is anything to be done."

She went back to her guest, all smiles, leaving the girl muttering to herself: "I guess if she had all the meals to get in this house, and the beds to make and the sweeping and dusting and washing and ironing to do, and all the dishes to wash, and

milk to take care of she would know what it is to be tired enough to drop when night comes. I'd like to see her obliged to do it for just two weeks."

"How sweet it was of you to come tonight when you knew I would be alone except for the servants and Tom," said Cecil, re-entering the parlor where she had left Jessamine. They drew their chairs out upon the porch, where they sat and chatted until the maid announced that their room was ready.

As they rose to go in a boy came bounding up the path and flung a string of fish and a rod on the steps. "Tom!" cried Cecil, "where are your manners? Why don't you speak to Miss Erlwin?"

"How do," said Tom, awkwardly. He was a great overgrown boy of fourteen, with a freckled face and large hands and feet. He seemed overcome with shyness for a moment, then throwing it off with a great apparent effort he came up the steps, and turning to Cecil said with an air of suppressed excitement:

"What do you suppose I see when I was comin' home?"

"I haven't the least idea," said Cecil. "What did you see, Tom?"

"I see a feller goin' into the grounds at the haunted house, and I followed him in just to see what he was goin' to do, and as true as you're alive he prowled around till he found that side door, and he went in, and I waited and watched around till it begun to grow dusk, and he didn't come out, and I didn't want to stay any longer in that place, so I come home. I'll bet he's goin' to stay there tonight."

"Who was the man?" asked Cecil.

"I don't know," replied Tom. "He aint like anybody in Greendell. He was dressed different somehow. He is someone from off, for I know everybody around here."

"Was he young or old?"

"Young, good lookin' chap. Guess he's from the city."

Cecil turned to Jessamine with a puzzled look, and found that young lady's eyes fixed upon Tom with an expression in them of the most intense interest.

"What could bring a young, fine looking city chap to the haunted house?" she said slowly. "It is mysterious isn't it? What do you think, Jessamine?"

"It is strange," answered Jessamine, her eyes shining with excitement. "Oh, isn't it just delightfully mysterious? How I wish,"—she hesitated and glanced at Tom, then turned to Cecil, her face sparkling with mischief.

"What!" they both cried breathlessly.

"That we could play ghost on him tonight. Wouldn't it be fun? I've been just dying for an adventure ever since I came here, and this is the best thing that has happened yet to get some real lively fun out of."

The last trace of Tom's shyness vanished at this, and stepping closer to Jessamine he said eagerly: "But how—where—how would we do it? Do you mean to say you would dare to go to the haunted house tonight? And how else could we?"

"That is precisely what I do mean," interrupted

Jessamine. "I would as soon go there at night as in the daytime. What is there to fear? You do not for one moment believe the stories that are told about it do you? Then why not?"

"Let's go up to my room," said Cecil catching her breath with a gasp of genuine surprise. "We can talk there without danger of being overheard."

Accordingly the three repaired to Cecil's chamber, which had been arranged as she had ordered by the maid with the help of Job, the stable boy; and once inside and the door closed they prepared to discuss the proposal made by Jessamine.

Tom could hardly believe his own ears. That a young, delicate, city-bred girl, who looked so dainty and fragile, would propose such an escapade was astonishing to say the least. His admiration for her began to rise. He had always supposed she was a timid, babyish specimen of feminine helplessness, he told Cecil afterward, a sort of tenderfooted aristocrat, easily shocked and frightened and to hear such a proposition from her—well he was "simply paralyzed," to use his own expression.

"What do you say to it?" asked Jessamine, after they were snugly ensconsed in the large bay window in Cecil's room. "Don't you think it would be a great lark?"

"You really mean it then?" said Tom. "You won't back down?"

"Of course I mean it. What do you think of it, Cecil."

"Why I hardly know what you really mean to

do. Of course I am ready for anything you and Tom may propose, if it isn't too—too—well—too risky. But I don't much fancy going to the haunted house in the dark. Don't you think it is a little bit dangerous?"

Jessamine rose and motioning them to an eastern window, pushed aside the muslin curtain and pointed to a large blood-red disc that was just appearing above the horizon. "Do you see that?" she said. "Do you think it will be dark with that great moon? Why it is going to be a glorious night. We could not ask for anything better. It will be almost as light as day in about two hours."

"That certainly makes it better," said Cecil." "I would rather go there by moonlight than in the dark. Well, unfold your plans; you and Tom can plan the lark and I will be with you. Now tell us what you propose to do."

Jessamine unfolded a plan which made Cecil's eyes open wide, and that caused Tom to slap his knee and exclaim: "That's great! And I've got some of that red fire left that I had last fall at election time, and with that and the white dress and the phosphorus we'll make it interesting for him. Miss Erlwin you're a brick. I'll go around the house and look in all the windows and see if I can locate him, for we must find out if we can what part of the house he is in, and then I will come and let you know where to get in so he will not see or hear us till the show begins."

"What if he should see you prowling about looking in at the windows?" said Cecil. "He might see you first, you know."

"Oh, I will look out for that and keep in the shadows under the trees," said Tom.

"What if he should have a revolver and shoot us?"

"Well," said Jessamine, "I will be the ghost and so take the chance. If he fired at anyone it would be the ghost, you know, and you and Tom can manage the red fire and the noise. You will not need to be seen, so you will not run any risk. I don't believe he has any firearms, and if he did shoot he would be pretty likely to miss the mark in the excitement. I'll risk that part of it anyhow. So that's settled. We played ghost at boarding school one night, and I never had so much fun before in my life."

About eleven o'clock three figures stole out at the back door of the Lexington farmhouse and paused a moment to listen ere they stepped out from under the shadow of the eaves. A sound of distant snoring came clearly to their ears causing Jessamine to smile and Tom to chuckle, while a look of disgust crossed Cecil's face.

"That's Job," said Tom, "it would take an earthquake to wake him up when he once gets to sleep."

"Yes, one that would shake the stupid pig out of bed," said Cecil, scornfully.

"Poor fellow, he is probably tired," said Jessamine. "But if he sleeps like that we will not fear that he will find out that we are not in the house."

"You lead the way, Tom," said Cecil, "have you the red fire?"

"Lots of it," answered Tom, "and we won't light the lanterns till we get inside the house. I've got the dark lantern for one. I'll bet you girls will back out yet."

"No we will not," said Jessamine. "Come on."

Tom moved off followed by Jessamine, who was wrapped in a long dark cloak, which completely covered the beautiful white lace dress which Cecil had insisted that she should wear. It was a costume which Cecil had once worn in a school exhibition and was made with a long train. "If you are going to be a ghost, be a beautiful one," she said, laughing, as she assisted Jessamine to gather up the train and don the long cloak. Then placing a crown of roses on her dark hair she stood off and surveyed her critically. "You'll do." she said. "Isn't she perfectly stunning, Tom?"

"Why don't you wrap up in a white sheet and let me put some splashes of red paint on it to look like blood, and carry a big knife in one hand and tuft of hair in the other?" said Tom enthusiastically.

"Oh, this is not going to be a raw-head and bloody-bones show," laughed Jessamine.

"No, indeed," said Cecil. "Jessamine is going to impersonate the lady who used to live in the haunted house. The lady who was murdered, you know, Tom. And she used to dress beautifully and she wore white on the night she was killed."

"All right," said Tom, "have your own way. But I like a ghost that is a ghost, ghastly, bloody, skeleton-like and all that."

Down through the meadow, across a large pasture, over a brook on a log, and through a field of clover Tom led his two companions. The moon was now flooding the earth with its silvery splendor, making the shadows under the trees darker by contrast. An occasional call from some night bird and the hooting of an owl in the distant wood broke the silence of the night, and the rippling of the brook over its stony bed sounded silvery sweet on the fresh June air. An odor of peppermint arose as Jessamine's long cloak brushed it in crossing the stream, and in after years the odor of peppermint would bring back vividly to her memory this night escapade.

When they arrived at the entrance to the grounds, and saw, looming up before them the great gloomy structure, bathed in the softening radiance of the moonlight, it looked so solitary and grand, so lonely and forsaken that Jessamine felt a thrill of sadness come over her which she could not account for. Cecil's feeling was one of dread, a terrible fear, and Tom's bravado was a little shaken when he came face to face with the dark vine-covered walls.

He halted under a group of trees, and bidding the two girls to wait there went forward to reconnoitre. Passing around the house he peered cautiously in at the windows and soon returned to them with the assurance that the "coast was clear."

"Did you locate him?" asked Cecil, breathlessly.

"I know what room he is in," replied Tom.

"You know the house is so big that two persons might walk about in it for some time without meeting each other. We can get up the back stairs without his seeing or hearing us even if he is awake. But I am sure he is asleep, everything was so quiet. Come on."

Keeping well within the shadows under the trees they passed around to the rear of the mansion, and stepped upon a small porch. Tom tried the door, and finding that it yielded to his efforts pushed it slowly open and looked in. He listened intently for a moment, then drew back, holding it ajar and motioned the two girls to enter. Jessamine gathered up her draperies and stepped over the threshold, Cecil followed, secretly quaking. Tom came after them, softly closing the door, and they were all inside the haunted house. They stood motionless for a few moments, listening to their own heart-beats. The darkness was stygian. Then Tom whispered: "Are you going to back out now? Aint you afraid?"

"No," whispered Jessamine, "lead the way, please. You have been in here by daylight. You can guide us."

Tom groped his way to the foot of the stairs, holding Jessamine by her cloak, and began to ascend, and when they had reached the top and opened another door a flood of moonlight greeted them. It shone in at the great windows, lighting up the upper hall so that all the doors to the various sleeping apartments were plainly visible. Cecil gave a great sigh of relief. "This is better,"

she whispered, "I did not like that awful darkness."

Tom led the way down this hall, and the two girls followed on tiptoe. When he had almost reached the end, which was lighted by a great arched window, he stopped and opening a door motioned them to enter. When they were all inside the room and the door shut he spoke in a low tone. "We can light up, now," he said. "We are so far from the room where the man is that he can't hear us if we do speak out loud."

He proceeded to light the lanterns he carried and when he had attended to that, he bolted the door of the room and they prepared to look about them.

The room was large and had evidently been elegantly furnished. A rich carpet, motheaten and dusty, covered the floor. The remnants of costly draperies still clung about the dressing table and bedstead, and a little lace-draped crib still stood in the middle of the room. There were three large windows looking out upon the front grounds, and in one broad window-seat the cushions still remained.

Cecil sank into a chair, and Tom sat down on the edge of the dismantled bedstead, pushing aside a tattered lace drapery that still hung from the upper frame, and Jessamine took one of the lanterns and began walking slowly about the room, examining the articles it contained, and even the walls came in for their share of inspection.

"Do you see that over the door?" asked Tom, as she passed him in her search. He pointed toward

the door by which they had entered. Jessamine held the lantern above her head and scanned the written words, "This is the ghost room."

"This must be the room which is preferred by the ghost," said Jessamine smiling faintly. A feeling of deep sadness was creeping over her, which she was striving to throw off. A sense of loneliness to which she did not wish to surrender was fast taking the place of the spirit of adventure in which she had planned this escapade.

"That middle window was the one where the woman stood when she was murdered," said Tom. "If you would go and stand there and hold the light over your head, and anybody should see you, they would say that the ghost was walking again. They could see you from the road just as plain. Why don't you do it?"

Jessamine set the lantern on the floor as far from the window as possible, and drawing her cloak about her to hide her white dress she went to the window and looked out. The view was a fine one. The grounds which lay spread out before her were very beautiful still, softened as they were by the moon's mellow light which was too pale to show the devastating ravages of time and neglect. Everything looked beautiful in the soft glow, and as she stood gazing out upon the same scene which the mistress of all this viewed on that fatal night when she looked her last upon her beautiful home, the feeling of sadness which had been growing in Jessamine's heart overcame her and she uttered a little sob.

She had momentarily forgotten the errand upon which they had come. Had forgotten that there was another than themselves in the house. She had become lost in a dreamy reverie of the past, and when at last she turned away from the window she stumbled against the little crib which she had not before noticed. Bending over it she examined it with great interest, and as the pathos of it all rushed over her the tears began to steal silently down her cheeks. Not wishing her companions to witness her emotion, she took up the lantern again, and turning her back to the desolate little crib, began to walk about the room again. A paper which was pinned upon the wall attracted her attention and holding the light close to it she saw that it was part of a leaf from an old magazine. It had been torn across and the upper part was gone, but a portion of a poem remained. Jessamine read these lines aloud.

"'Around the dim old mansion, with its walls so grey and mossed,
And over the desolate garden, where the faded leaves are tossed,
There broods an air of sorrow; a sense of something lost.
Alas for that home's old brightness. It passeth away with the dead.
Alas for the joys that have vanished, and the pure delights that are fled;
For the tones that memory echoes, and the tender charm they shed.
The house seems sad and silent, but in one lonely room,
A pictured face is gleaming, like a fair white rose in bloom;
Like a lovely flower that blossoms to brighten the shade of the tomb.

The smile that lingers o'er it, is sad as the moonlight ray,
And the picture seems a symbol of the times that have passed
away;
A ghost of the past still haunting the ruins of today.'"

There was silence in the room for a few moments after she ceased reading, and Tom was the first to break it.

"There is a picture like that down stairs," he said.

"Oh, I think this is the saddest thing I ever saw," said Jessamine with a catch in her voice. "This old ruined home, that little crib; the very air seems full of the deepest sorrow. I never felt so in any place I was ever in before in my life. I feel almost as lonesome as I did after mamma died. I can't tell you how this place affects me. Don't you feel it, Cecil?"

"I feel as though I would like to get away from here," said Cecil.

"Don't you think we had better give up trying to play ghost and go back home?"

"Play ghost!" said Jessamine, "why, I had forgotten that we came here for that purpose. I was so interested in examining this place, and so impressed by it that it had entirely slipped my mind. I could no more play ghost here than I could play a comedy in a cemetery, or dance on a grave. It would be sacrilege, a desecration to play anything here. But I would like to look at that picture and then go home. Do you know where it is Tom? Can you show me the way to it?"

Tom who had listened to what she said with a

feeling of deep disgust and disappointment at the thought of being deprived of the anticipated pleasure of seeing her play ghost, now brightened perceptibly at this, and began to do some rapid thinking. He knew that the young man who was spending the night here was asleep on the old couch in the very room where the picture hung. He thought he saw a way to carry out the original plan in spite of Jessamine's sudden change of purpose.

"Of all fools a sickly sentimental girl is the biggest," he thought. "A feller never knows when they will back out of anything and spoil a whole show. If I can get her into that room I'll have the fun of seeing her play ghost after all, whether she means to or not. Much I care what she wants." Aloud he said: "The picture is only a few steps from here. I can show you the way, and set the light on the stairs so it will strike right on it."

"Do you want to go and see it, Cecil?" she asked, turning to her.

A sudden fit of shivering had come over Cecil. Her teeth chattered in spite of all her efforts at self-control. Jessamine looked at her in astonishment, then came swiftly to her side. "What is the matter, dear?" she said anxiously. "Are you cold? I thought it was rather warm and close in here. Let me put this around you, I do not need it in the least." She took off her cloak and wrapped it about Cecil, then taking her hands in her's she found them icy cold.

"How selfish I have been," said Jessamine. "We will go right away. I had no idea you were cold. I am afraid you will be ill, and if you are I will never forgive myself."

"I am not so cold as you think," said Cecil through her chattering teeth. "I am nervous that is all. Go and see the picture and then we will leave this awful place. I will sit here and wait for you, and Tom can hold the light for you, but I have not the slightest desire to see it."

"Come on," said Tom. "We will take one lantern and leave the other with Cecil, and I will use the dark lantern to throw the light on the picture with, and I will set off a little of the red fire at the head of the stairs just to make plenty of light for us all so that Cecil will feel more easy in her mind, and she can come out into the hall if she is too nervous to stay in here."

"But we ought not to keep her here another minute when she feels so. I can see the picture some other time just as well," said Jessamine.

"No, no," said Cecil, "go and look at it; you will not be more than three minutes, and I can wait that long. You may never be here again so you had better see it now for you may never have another chance."

Tom took the lantern and passed out motioning Jessamine to follow. When they were in the hall he whispered: "Cecil's scart half to death, that's what ails her."

"I'm so sorry I was so foolish as to plan this," said Jessamine. "It is all my fault. I ought to have known better."

"It's all right," said Tom, as he led her to the top of the grand stair-case. "Now," taking the dark-lantern from his coat, "you look right down the stairs to the foot, and you will see a large archway which is the opening into the room on the right, and when I flash the light down there you will see a fire-place right on the other side of the arch. The picture hangs over the fire-place, so you just go down the stairs and when you get to the archway you will see the picture. I will go part way down and flash the light on it from the middle of the stairs."

He drew the slide and sent a shaft of light down the dark stairs revealing the archway and just beyond it the dim outlines of a fire-place.

"I would go all the way down with you, but that Cecil would have a fit if we both should go down stairs and leave her up here all alone," he said apologetically.

"Do you think there is any danger of that man seeing us? Is he in this part of the house?" she asked.

"No," replied Tom, lying glibly, "he is 'way around in the other wing. He can't even see the light from there."

"Don't light the red fire," she said, "for that might be seen by some one, and the other light will be sufficient. If you hold the lantern on the stairs I can see well enough."

Taking her arm he led her half way down the great staircase, and pausing, turned the ray from the dark lantern full upon the pictured face above

the mantel. "Look," he whispered, "there it is. I can get the best light on it from here." He set the lantern on the stair.

"Oh yes," she whispered, "I see it now. This is a good light. Just leave it right there, please, and I shall be able to see very plainly."

She moved on slowly down the stairs with her eyes fixed on the portrait, and on reaching the floor below, advanced until she stood beneath it, gazing up at the beautiful face which seemed to smile down upon her. So intent was she upon the picture that she did not notice that Tom had lighted the red fire until a fiery glow crept over the smiling pictured face. Turning, she looked up and saw Tom at the head of the stairs busily engaged in his work, while Cecil leaned over the banister watching them both, their forms enveloped in the blood-red light which now illuminated the entire hall, and if Jessamine could have seen herself she would have known that her white lace gown and rose-crowned head were also tinged with the carmine glow.

CHAPTER IV.

How long Ernest Grayland slept he could not have told. The moon had passed beyond the windows, and the room was in darkness except for a faint light which came through the archway, filtering down the stairway from the windows in the upper hall, when he suddenly awoke, and, in the gloom of the room was for a moment unable to recall where he was or what had happened. Then memory returned, and he was about to turn over on the couch and go to sleep again when a sound of whispering voices dispelled all desire for slumber. He was wide awake now and straining his ears to detect the direction from which the sound came. He could not make out the words, the whispers were too indistinct for that, and he was about to rise from his couch and investigate the meaning of this strange occurrence when a shaft of light shot down the stairs, and wavering a moment, at last rested directly upon the picture above the fire-place.

"Well, well," thought Ernest, "I must be about to receive a visit from the ghostly tenants of this house. This will be a new experience." He raised himself upon his elbow and watched the light with intense interest.

It remained steady at last, resting exactly on the face of the portrait. The whispers ceased. Then came the sound of soft foot-steps slowly descending the stairs and the rustle of trailing skirts, and then he saw a beautiful female figure all in white with a crown of roses on her head come slowly into view, and descending the last stair, move toward the fire-place with her eyes fixed on the picture above it. Soon a blood-red glow began to penetrate the gloom of the hall and as the waves of red light swept over the white robed figure, she suddenly turned so that her face was toward the silent watcher, and looking backward up the stairway made a movement as though to leave by the way she had come.

Acting upon the impulse of the moment Ernest Grayland sprang to his feet, and with two or three strides placed himself between the fair apparition and the lowest stair. "Have I the honor to address the fair spirit who haunts this old mansion?" he asked, bowing low before her, while she shrank back with a low cry which was echoed by a shrill scream from above where Cecil—coming out into the hall and looking over the railing—had been a witness to this denouement. There was a moment of thrilling silence after that while Ernest glanced upward and saw Tom at the top of the stairs and Cecil's white frightened face just beyond, and the dark lantern with its slide open, revealing to him the whole business.

"Well, ladies and gentlemen," he began, "I am very much pleased to meet such substantial,

healthy looking ghosts. This visit is a great pleasure I assure you. I was inclined to feel lonesome and somewhat dull, and this has given me a most delightful entertainment. Won't you all come down with your lights, and assist in making the rooms down here less gloomy? I saw by the signboard that this place was haunted, but I had no idea that it was by such a pleasant company as this."

Silence followed his remarks. Complete consternation had taken possession of the entire three. Ernest Grayland was the only one who seemed cool and collected.

Tom had not bargained for any such reception as this. He had flattered himself that he was going to cause some fear and excitement in the lonely tenant of this place. He had expected to hear him make a hasty exit. He had not counted on being beaten at his own game.

He stood motionless for a few moments, the red fire dying gradually down until only the light from the lanterns illuminated the scene. Complete silence reigned. At last with a quick movement and haughty little air Jessamine said with as much dignity as she could command under the circumstances: "Will you please allow me to pass?"

He stepped aside instantly, but she had taken only two steps toward the stairs when he put out one hand imploringly, and said in the humblest manner possible: "Please do not go and leave me here alone. You, sir," addressing Tom, "won't you come down here, or allow me to come up there

with you? I am not joking. I am really glad to meet you all. It is lonesome here, and I am a stranger in a strange place. It will be a real kindness if you will stay with me or let me stay with you, whichever way is proper."

Tom began to recover his self-possession. He turned to Cecil and picking up the lantern said: "Come on, let's go down, he looks like a good feller."

"No, no," said Cecil, faintly, but Tom took her by the arm and began to descend. Jessamine saw them coming and waited, her cheeks flushed with excitement, her dark eyes glowing. When they reached the bottom of the stairs Tom handed one lantern to Jessamine and passed on through the arch-way. Mechanically they all followed him. Cecil was trembling nervously.

"Sit down here on this lounge," said Tom, and she obeyed, seating herself on the couch which Ernest had just vacated. Jessamine placed herself beside Cecil and Tom sat down on the floor. Ernest Grayland remained standing, leaning his elbow on the mantelpiece. An embarrassing silence followed. At last Tom spoke.

"Well, this is a great go," he said. "I guess you scart us worse than we did you."

Ernest laughed a pleased genial laugh, which did much to restore Jessamine's self-possession. "I am glad you came, whatever you had planned to do," he said. "I would rather be the victim of almost any kind of a prank than to be left alone in such a place as this. I was never in this part of the

country before and I do not know a soul in this village. That is the reason why I came here to spend the night."

"Then you did not come here to investigate the haunted house just to see if it was haunted?" asked Jessamine.

"No indeed," was the laughing reply, "I came here because my horse was too tired to go on, and I had no other place to stay. I never thought of investigating ghosts."

"But why didn't you stay at the hotel?" asked Tom, bluntly. "Didn't you know there was one here?"

Cecil opened her lips to rebuke Tom for his familiar questioning of this stranger, but before she could speak the young man said in reply to Tom's inquiry: "I know there is a hostelry here, and I put up my horse there for the night, but I left home with very little money, expecting to reach my destination and return home tonight, but I took the wrong road, lost my way for a time and went some miles astray before I discovered my mistake, and also had the ill luck to lose what little money I had with me excepting the small amount necessary for the comfort of my horse. I could have telegraphed home for money, but did not wish to, for I expect to get home tomorrow, so I came to this house because it was unoccupied, and I thought it would be a sort of shelter, though it is such a warm night I could have slept out of doors without much discomfort."

While he had been speaking, Jessamine's

thoughts had reverted to what her Uncle Ely had said about the handsome young stranger whom he had seen at the inn. "This must be he," she thought. Aloud she said: "Did you know that this place is shunned by everyone and especially at night? Why did you not explain your position to someone in the village, and get a more comfortable lodging? There are plenty of people in Greendell who would be pleased to receive as a guest such a"—she came very near saying, such a high bred looking man as you. She caught herself just in time, and finished her sentence with—"One under those circumstances."

"I suppose that would have been a more sensible proceeding," he replied, "but I always had a deep-rooted aversion to anything like begging. I would rather go without anything than to ask it of strangers and feel that they looked upon me as a possible, if not probable, impostor. I am foolishly sensitive on that point, probably because I have seen so many mendicants on the streets of cities both at home and abroad."

"I live in the city," said Jessamine, "and can readily understand that."

"Perhaps we are from the same place," he said. "I am Ernest Grayland. I should have introduced myself before."

"Oh!" cried Jessamine, joyously, "is it possible? Why, I have known of you for years, but never happened to meet you. We are almost neighbors," turning to Cecil and Tom, "this is Mr. Ernest Grayland whose father has always been such a

great traveler. Mr. Grayland, this is Miss Lexington and Master Tom Lexington."

Ernest bowed low and murmured words of pleasure at making their acquaintance. "It is not at all strange that we have never met before," he said, "for I am also a traveler, and have spent most of my time abroad, returning home only at rare intervals. I am delighted to meet one of my own townspeople in this lonely place. It seems brighter here already. I consider myself very fortunate, Miss"—"Erlwin," said Jessamine, as he paused to give her a chance to mention her own name. "My father is William Erlwin of —— St."

"I know him well," said Ernest, "he is one of the most prominent men in town. I think everyone in the city knows your father, Miss Erlwin."

"Well, this is jolly," said Tom, who had been listening with open mouth and wide eyes to these disclosures. "It is a jolly good thing we happened to come down here, Mr., I guess Jessamine is glad now that she played ghost."

"Tom!" said Cecil, in a warning voice "Miss Erlwin did not play ghost. What are you saying?"

"I know she backed out, and didn't mean to," said Tom chuckling, "but she did play it all the same."

"Miss Erlwin was very anxious to see this house inside," said Cecil, turning to Ernest Grayland and speaking in a very impressive manner. "She had so often viewed it from the outside and had never had an opportunity to inspect the interior, we thought we would come tonight because it is

such bright moonlight, but we had no idea that there was any one here,"—with a warning glance at Tom. "That picture over the fire-place she was particularly anxious to see, having heard so much about it, so we said we would all come and look the place through, merely out of curiosity. Of course the story that it is haunted is absurd."

Cecil glanced at Jessamine with a look of triumph as she finished this explanation. Triumph over Tom and his indiscretion in mentioning their original intentions. Jessamine looked the picture of innocence, and Tom drew his face into a most comical expression, which did not escape the eyes of their new-found acquaintance. He had seen too much of the world to be easily deceived, and as he looked at Jessamine's white lace gown with its long train, the wreath of roses crowning her dark hair, Tom's ludicrous expression of suppressed mirth, and thought of the red fire which had lighted up the hall and staircase, he drew his own conclusions regardless of Cecil's plausible story and dignified air. He kept the expression of his face from betraying his thoughts, however, and his manner was all that could be desired.

All the time Cecil had been speaking, Jessamine's thoughts had been busy. She recalled what Ely Nayburn had said about the stranger not entering the inn, and also what he himself had just said in regard to "anything like begging being very distasteful to him." She thought from the appearance of things that he had probably had no supper, and that after his long ride on horseback he

must be ravenously hungry. A feeling of admiration for this man, who, when he had not money enough for both himself and horse, had provided that animal with its accustomed oats at such a sacrifice to his own personal comfort was uppermost in her mind.

How to provide for his comfort was a question which puzzled her, and for a few moments kept her silent. She was only a guest herself, and therefore had no hospitality of her own to offer. Cecil's parents were away from home, and it would hardly do to take this stranger to their house at midnight, with no one there but the servants to play propriety. She felt at a loss what to do. They had not intended that this escapade should ever be known to anyone but the actors in it. If they were to take this young man to the Lexington farmhouse, how would they explain his presence to Job and the little maid of all work? They would be sure to tell of it, and then all the village of Greendell would hear of it. On Cecil's account this must never be, and besides, Jessamine's father might hear of it and then—well that would be too dreadful. She could not think of anything much worse than that. At last a plan occurred to her by which it might be managed.

"I believe I dropped my handkerchief in the hall or on the stairs," she said. "If you, Tom, will please come with me and bring a lantern I think I can find it. It may be on the floor upstairs."

Tom rose quickly, picked up a lantern and preceded her up the stairs, leaving Cecil to entertain

the stranger during their absence. When they reached the upper hall she motioned Tom to come into the ghost room, as there would be less danger of being overheard, and he wonderingly obeyed, something in her mysterious manner arousing his curiosity.

"Do you know," she said, "that everything goes to show that Mr. Grayland has not had any supper? He must be nearly starved after his long ride, and he had only money enough to provide for his horse, and has done without anything himself. Do you think you could go up to the house, get in quietly, and get my purse out of that dress I took off when I put on this one? Could you do it without waking up the servants? You know it would never do for them to find out anything about this night's performance. And I can loan him money enough so that he can go to the hotel and make himself comfortable, and continue his journey without any more inconvenience either to himself or his horse."

"I can do that easy enough, if you and Cecil aint afraid to stay here while I'm gone, but what's the matter of my packin' up some grub, and bringin' it back with me? And we will eat supper together here. I think that would be more kind of sociable, and as long as you know all about this feller and his family, what's the harm?"

"That will be just the thing," replied Jessamine, with enthusiasm. "You need have no fears of Ernest Grayland. His father is one of the finest men, and he belongs to one of the oldest and wealthiest families in the city."

"That settles it," said Tom. "I'll go down the back stairs and scoot for home, and when you get back down stairs you tell Cecil I've gone up to the house and will be back in just a few minutes."

"You'll find my purse in the sleeve of my Eton jacket," said Jessamine. "Don't forget that, please."

"Find a purse in an eaten jacket?" said Tom, with a grin, "well I don't see how anybody can find anything in a jacket after it's eaten.

Jessamine laughed. "I mean that little short jacket I wore over my light waist. It is like the dress skirt. You know now, don't you?"

"Is that why you call it an eaten jacket, because it is little and short, kind of knawed off?"

"That may have had something to do with the name," she replied. "You'll hurry, won't you?"

"I won't be gone more than fifteen minutes," he declared, and darting toward the back stairs he disappeared.

When Jessamine returned to the room below, where Cecil was chatting with their new-found guest, the first question after she entered was: "Where is Tom? Did you find your handkerchief?"

Jessamine drew the last named article from her sleeve, and held it up. "Tom will be back in a few minutes," she replied. "He went home after something in a great hurry. He will not be gone long."

The time passed rapidly during Tom's absence, for they took the lantern and explored some of the rooms, but excepting for a few pieces of dust-laden furniture, and moth-eaten draperies they found

nothing interesting. They were still roaming about when the sound of a door slammed shut announced Tom's arrival, and soon he appeared before them with a large basket in each hand, which he deposited carefully on the couch, and going into another room began to haul a table from its long accustomed place.

"Just lend a hand here, somebody," he called, and they all flew to obey. Ernest Grayland picked it up bodily and carried it through the doorway. "Where do you want it?" he asked.

"Right here!" cried Tom, "in the middle of this room."

"What are you going to do, Tom?" asked Cecil.

"We are goin' to set the table and have some supper," said Tom joyously. "I'm most starved and I brought down two baskets full of grub so we could all picnic in the haunted house." He made a dive for the baskets, and taking a cloth off the top of one of them proceeded to lay it on the table, Cecil and Jessamine joined in the work, and while they were all busy Tom watched his opportunity and slipped a purse into Jessamine's hand which she hastily thrust inside her dress.

When the baskets had been emptied of their contents the repast which was spread upon the table was all that could be desired or expected under the circumstances, for Tom had helped himself liberally to the best he could find in pantry and cellar. They all smiled when they saw the "layout" as he called it, and drawing up the couch the two girls seated themselves upon that while Tom and

Ernest possessed themselves of two broken chairs which they had found, and drawn up to the festive board.

Cecil had almost recovered her usual spirits in the midst of all this novelty and Jessamine felt the weight and depression lifted from her heart. Tom was in his element and it was quite a merry party which gathered about the board to partake of cold biscuit and honey, brown bread, cold boiled ham, chicken, currant jelly, cake, pie, pickles, and cheese, a pitcher of iced milk, cold tea, and to "cap the basket," as Tom expressed it, a bottle of blackberry wine.

"Now, Mr. Grayland," said Jessamine as they proceeded to do justice to the little banquet, "I wish to explain to you why things are just as they are. You see I am visiting my friends here, and their parents have gone away and left us alone with their servants, and we planned to visit this old house which people say is haunted, and we did not intend that anyone should find out about our little lark. So you see how we are situated. My friends here would have been very glad to have invited you to their house if they could have done so without our escapade becoming known. But you see the servants would be sure to speak of it, and then we would be requested to give an account of our doings, and that is just what we would not like to do.

"As I was prime mover in the game—in planning it I mean—I should have to shoulder all the responsibility for it, and if my father ever found out

about this performance he would never allow me to go out of his sight again. But I was just dying of curiosity to see the inside of this old house, and that was why we came. Now I want you to take this as a little loan to see you through your journey, and you really must take it or I shall feel very much hurt." She held out two five dollar bills with an expression of countenance which precluded the possibility of refusing her request.

"Your kindness will never be forgotten, Miss Erlwin," he said, "but you offer me more than I shall need. I have only a few miles more to travel beyond this place, and I expect to get home by tomorrow afternoon, so you see I shall not need so much. I will accept a small loan from you with pleasure, but one of these bills will be ample for my needs, so I will take one of them and thank you very much, and it will also afford me an opportunity to call and return it, so it will be the means of giving me still further pleasure. Shall you be here long?"

"No," she replied, coloring slightly, "I expect to be back in the city inside of a month at least."

"Then I will call if I may, and you may rest assured that no word of tonight's meeting will ever pass my lips to other than you three, who have contributed so much to my comfort and enjoyment. I wish to thank Miss Lexington and Master Tom for all their kindness. This night will be treasured in my memory as one of the pleasantest experiences of my life."

"Wall, you aint the only one that's enjoyed it,"

said Tom, "fer I've had a crackin' good time. I like to git into a scrape once in a while; it does a feller good; livens him up and makes him feel as if he was somebody."

They all laughed and arose from the table. The girls put the cloth and napkins and dishes back in the baskets, while Tom, with a triumphant air, produced some cigars and offered them to Ernest. "I know pa always likes to smoke after dinner," he said, "so I brought along some of his."

"Thank you, I don't care if I do," said Ernest, accepting one. "You must come up to the city and make me a visit, so I can do something to make it pleasant for you. Will you?"

"Oh, I'd like to," replied Tom, "if it wasn't fer meetin' so many swells. How would I look 'side of them? You'd be ashamed of me. I haint got no manners."

"Not I," said Ernest. "You come right along and never mind the swells, and we will have a good time, I promise you."

"Alright," said Tom, "I'll do it. Now if we could only see a ghost I'd feel as if this hull business had been done up right and proper, as it is I feel as if that's all that's lackin'."

His speech at this point was cut short by a blinding flash as of lightning, followed by a crash of thunder over their heads, which was deafening. They looked at each other in astonishment. Every face in the little party expressed amazement at this most unexpected thing. Ernest stepped to a window and looked up at the heavens. The moon

was riding high in a sky in which there was not a cloud to be seen. The portion of the grounds visible from that point were flooded with the silvery light. He turned to his companions and opened his lips to speak, when he was interrupted by the sound of a shot, followed by a cry so shrill, mournful and filled with agony that it chilled the blood in their veins. There was the sound of a falling body somewhere over their heads, then the patter of swiftly running feet, a sobbing voice crying, "Oh! she's killed," then came another flash, a second peal of thunder and all was still.

Our little party stood silently gazing at each other. Tom's face expressed blank amazement; Jessamine's unbounded astonishment not unmixed with curiosity. Ernest Grayland looked as though he had received a revelation. Cecil's face was ghastly, and her form trembled and shook so that she could hardly stand. The first movement made by any of the party was when Jessamine stepped to her side, and passing her arm about her, supported her trembling form to the couch and seated her upon it. Then turning to Ernest she said in an awed whisper: "What do you think of it? What is it?"

"I think I will go and find out if I can," he replied, and started to put his resolve into execution, when a white, trembling hand was extended toward him, and Cecil gasped out between her chattering teeth: "Don't go and leave us alone in this room. If you do I shall die."

"Let us get you out into the air," said Jessamine, alarmed lest Cecil should faint, and taking

her by the arm, with the assistance of Tom and Ernest, they succeeded in getting her out into the grounds. "Not under the trees," she whispered. "I don't want to stop here. Let us get out of these grounds and into the meadow where it is lighter. I shall be all right there."

They kept on until they reached the brook, and Cecil dropped down on the end of the log that spanned it. They were beyond the trees now, and out of the shadows and she soon declared that she felt better. "I will rest here a few minutes," she said, "and then I shall be able to go home."

"Don't you think I had better go back now and investigate the cause of the disturbance and get the baskets and your cloaks?" asked Ernest.

"If you want to go back into that place, we will wait here for you," said Cecil, "but you need not go on account of the things. I wouldn't go back in there for a gold mine."

"Oh, I shall be better satisfied to go and see what I can find," he replied. "Tom can stay here with you and I will not be gone long. You will be all right if he is with you, will you not?"

"Yes," said Cecil, "I feel better already. We will wait here."

They watched him stride away until he was swallowed up in the shadows, and after what seemed like an hour but was really only about fifteen minutes he appeared with the baskets in his hands, and the cloaks over his arm. There was a puzzled look in his handsome eyes as they greeted him with a storm of eager questions as to what

he saw, what he did, etc., but he replied that he had been upstairs and searched every room excepting one that was locked and had looked in every nook and corner by the light of the lanterns, but he had failed to find one clue to the extraordinary occurrence. He declared that he was never so puzzled to account for anything in his life, and he had traveled a great deal and had many strange experiences, but nothing like this.

They walked on slowly talking in low tones of the mystery until they were near the Lexington farmhouse when the guest of the evening said: "I will bid you good night here as you are so near your own door, and I want you to know how much you have contributed to my comfort and pleasure tonight, and I hope to meet you all again, and will not be satisfied until I do. Miss Erlwin, I am under deep obligations to you for your kindness in extending me this loan, and I will call and return it as soon as you get back to the city. You may all trust me never to mention this night's strange meeting and experience, and I will say good night, but not good bye, for we shall meet again."

They shook his hand warmly and he exacted a promise from Tom that he would visit him in his city home.

They watched him as long as they could see his figure in the moonlight, as he strode swiftly away, and then turned all their attention toward getting into the house without awakening the servants. In this they were successful, and soon were in their

sleeping apartments and snugly in bed, with no one the wiser for this escapade which had ended so mysteriously.

CHAPTER V.

The Gypsy camp presented a picturesque appearance when Ernest Grayland, mounted upon his beautiful Rocket, rode up to it on the morning following, and as the Gypsies came out and gathered about him he asked if they had a sick man among them by the name of Harnley. They immediately answered in the affirmative and half a dozen offered to show him the way to him, when one man, older than all the rest, intercepted them. "A word with you, sir," he said respectfully, "before you go to him. I want to say that Nat Harnley is dying slowly but surely with consumption, but you don't want to let on to him that you think it is consumption that ails him, or he will get into a temper and spoil your visit. He is lookin' fer you and has been frettin' to see you, 'cause he says he's got somethin' to tell you afore he croaks with his indigestion and heart disease; but it aint consumption, and he don't want to hear anyone say it is, you understand?"

"I understand perfectly," replied Ernest. "I have known such cases before. Some are very irritable, and easily angered at anyone who insinuates that

they are afflicted with that disease. It seems to be a part of it."

"Exactly," replied the man. "And you might tell him that he don't look so awful bad; that you was expectin' to see him lookin' worse, and all that."

"I see, and will do as you suggest."

"That's a mighty fine horse of yourn. You wouldn't sell him, I don't suppose?"

"Oh, Rocket and I are old friends, sort of old chums, you know. I couldn't part with him very well."

They had nearly reached the tent when they were confronted by an old woman who extended her withered hand and grasped at Ernest's sleeve. "Let me tell your fortune," she said in a coaxing voice. "You are such a fine lad there must be good times in store for you."

Ernest had changed his five dollar bill when he took his horse from the inn, and now, bowing with as much politeness to the old crone as he would have to anyone, he dropped a dollar into her outstretched hand. "You may when I come back," he said, "but now I am in a hurry to see the sick man."

As he passed on she stood looking after him, muttering to herself, "A mighty fine lookin' boy, and a civil spoken one. A lad who belongs to the high class. A fine gentleman, and good and true, and that's more'n you can say of some of em."

When Ernest entered the tent preceded by his guide, he was somewhat prepared for the sight

which met his eyes. On a low but comfortable bed a man was reclining, propped up by cushions, and one look at his ghastly countenance told him that this was the man whom he had come to see. The Gypsy, with awkward courtesy, introduced him after a fashion and Ernest seated himself in the chair which was placed for him. Then saying that he would go and take another look at Ernest's horse, he departed, leaving them alone together.

"I suppose you are wondering what I sent for you to come here in this way for," began the sick man in a husky voice.

"Of course, I wondered what you had to tell me," replied Ernest, "for I do not remember ever having met you in any of my travels, so, of course, I could not imagine what it could be; but it is all right and I could come as well as not, so here I am.

"I shall have to tell my story in as few words as possible," said the man, "for talking makes me cough. Ever since I have been troubled with this indigestion I have had this cough. It all comes from my stomach, and my heart is weak, and I can't live long now I know. A man can't live when his stomach and heart, are worn out can he?"

"Certainly not, but you don't look as bad as I expected to find you, from what you wrote to me. Perhaps you may find something that will help your case yet. While there is life there is hope, you know."

"There is no hope for me. I've known for quite a while. But I didn't want to tell my story while I was well enough to be arrested and sent to jail.

Now, I guess anybody would hesitate some about movin' me to jail."

"Is it then so bad as that?"

"It is just as bad as that. Did you come through Greendell?"

"I did, and stopped in that place last night."

"Did you come past an old deserted house? A great big house with a board at the gate with the word 'haunted' on it in big letters?"

"I saw the very place, and stopped and looked at it."

"Do you know that your father owns that estate?"

"My father?" No!" cried Ernest in astonishment. "Do you know what you are saying?"

"Perfectly," said the man with a grim smile. "Your name is Grayland, is it not?"

"My name is Ernest Grayland."

"Named after your uncle, your father's brother who used to live there. Haven't you ever heard the story of your uncle's death, and the murder of his wife and child? Did your father never tell you anything about the tragedy that happened in the old haunted house? The crime that completely wiped out your uncle's little family?"

"No, he never mentioned it to me; but my father is peculiar, and spends most of his time in Egypt in study and research, and he never tells me anything about my relatives, anyway. He is a good old dad, and never tells anyone anything that he thinks could worry them. I never heard a word of this before. You see I have been traveling a

good share of the time, and I never happened to hear of it. How long ago did it happen?

"About fourteen years or thereabouts."

"You see I was only a youngster then. I am twenty-two now."

"A boy of eight years. No, your father probably would not tell you then the particulars of your uncle's death. But I should have thought he would have told you after you were old enough to understand all about it."

"Well, he never has, that's sure. And are you going to tell me?"

"That's just what I sent for you to come here for. I had more to do with it than anyone knew. Just hand me that water, please, talking makes me cough."

Ernest handed him the drink he asked for, and waited for him to recover from the fit of coughing that seemed to rend him almost in twain. At last it was over and he lay gasping with exhaustion for a few moments. At last he revived somewhat and turned his eyes again upon Ernest.

"There was a Gypsy girl who belonged to a tribe that used to camp here in this very place, and she saw your uncle when he was a young man and fell in love with him. He used to come out here summers with a gay party of swells, and they used to make merry in the old place that is now known as the 'haunted house.' It was a grand place then, and he called it by another name I can't just remember; but they used to come out here to the camp to get their fortunes told, and that

is probably where she first met him. Anyway it was a clear case of the wildest infatuation on her part. She went kind of crazy about him, I think, for I don't believe the man noticed her any more than he did the other Gypsies. He was too proud to pay attentions to such as she, but she followed him about like a dog wherever she could.

"A year or two after that he married a woman of his own class, a high-bred beauty, a grand, queenly looking woman. They say her picture hangs in the old house yet. Well, when this girl heard that he was married I thought she would go wild. You see I was in the same tribe and I was sweet on the girl myself and it nearly drove me frantic to see her go on so about him. I wanted her to marry me but she wouldn't, and I was young and foolish, and thought I wanted her more than I did anything else on earth. After a couple of years had gone by, your uncle and his wife came out here again for a few weeks one summer and brought their little one, which was about a year old I should think, and that aroused the Gypsy girl to a new frenzy. The sight of them so happy in their little paradise, and so satisfied with each other just drove her mad you may say.

"One night she came to my tent and called me out, and asked me to come into the woods, for she had something to say to me. I went with her, noticing that she had a bundle in her arms. When we had gone far enough so we would not be overheard, she turned to me and said: 'Nat, I I want you to do something for me tonight that

will test your love, and if you will I will marry you tomorrow, if you wish.'

"How I thrilled all over at those words from her. I can feel it yet, though all these years have passed. 'I'll do anything for you, Nell,' I said. 'There isn't a thing on earth you could ask of me I would not do to win you for my own.' 'Then,' she said, 'take this child and find a home for it to-night, and say nothing about it to the rest of our people, for they have not seen it. Take it away from here to some place where I am not known. If you will do this for me I am yours whenever you say.' She laid the bundle in my arms and I started so that I nearly dropped it. 'Is it yours?' I asked her roughly, for I was nearly wild for a moment with jealousy. She laughed a sad, dreary laugh. I can hear it now. 'Dear old Nat,' she said, 'of course it is not mine. It belongs to a friend of mine I am trying to help, a dear friend, Nat, and I can't trust anyone with it but you.' She raised herself on her tiptoes and put her arm about my neck and touched my face with her lips, and I think I would have gone through fire for her then.

"'You'll take it away from here and find it a home with someone, won't you? And go quickly before anyone sees it or it wakes up and cries. You stand here and I'll bring your horse and you can mount right here.' She slipped away and left me standing there with the sleeping babe in my arms, and a hundred emotions chasing each other through my heart. She soon returned leading my horse and bade me be off before anyone should see us.

"'But this has taken me so by surprise, I don't know what to do,' I said. 'I don't know what to do with this kid. Whose is it, anyway?' 'I can't tell you, Nat, for it is my friend's secret, not my own. You can do this much for me if you love me, I know.' 'But where will I go with it?' I said. 'I haven't any place to put this baby, unless I put it in an orphan asylum.' 'Take it where you will,' she said, 'and hark! Someone is coming this way. Go quickly! Good bye, dear Nat, good bye.'

"I mounted my horse and rode through the forest for miles. I think she must have drugged the child, for I never knew one of that age to keep quiet so long. I knew not where to go nor what to do with it. At last I thought of a woman in a small village not very far distant who was as much in love with me as I was with Nell. I decided to take the child to her and ask her to keep it for a while anyway, and I turned my horse in that direction.

"It was daylight when I knocked at her door. She looked astonished at seeing me at that early hour, but she looked still more astonished when I stated my business. I asked her to keep the child for a time until I could make some arrangements for its permanent home. She flared up and asked me if it was mine, much as I had flared up about it to Nell. I assured her that it was not. That it belonged to a friend of mine who was in trouble. She would not believe me at first, but after I took the shawl from around it and showed her its angelic beauty, she agreed that it did not resemble

me to any extent. It was a perfect little beauty and no mistake. Golden hair, dark blue eyes, a perfect little face, and the finest clothes I ever saw on a kid. A little diamond finger ring and jeweled pin that it wore convinced the woman that it was none of mine. She never would have taken it if she hadn't been sweet on me, and she thought it would give her a hold on me. But she finally consented, and I gave her ten dollars and told her I I would bring or send her more as soon as I could.

"Glad to get that off my hands, I hastened back to camp, to find that Nell was dead; had poisoned herself, and the tribe were wild with excitement over the crime she had committed. She had shot and killed your uncle's wife before she came to me with the child, and she had stolen the child, your little cousin, and had written a letter to your uncle, saying that she had killed his wife and carried off and strangled his child for revenge. That she had buried it in the woods where no one could find it, and that by the time he received her letter she should be dead and beyond his power to punish. The shock killed the man, and I don't wonder at it much.

"The camp broke up and scattered and my feelings can be imagined. When I began to comprehend it all, I could see what a fool she had made of me. She had used me for a tool to help her with her dirty work. She had committed this murder out of revenge, an insane jealousy being the motive power. She had stolen this child and then, when it came to taking its little throat in

her hands and strangling it, her nerve failed her. She could have easily put the baby to death if she had chosen, but for some reason she did not, but had used me instead to get it off her hands before she died. I know I ought to have made a full confession of what I knew about the child and I should have done so immediately if the abduction of the child had been all that Nell had been guilty of, but the murder of your uncle's wife, followed so soon after by your uncle's death, took all the courage out of me. I was afraid to speak for fear of being held as an accomplice. Gypsies were not thought any too much of anyway. They were always viewed with more or less suspicion even when they were innocent, and I dared not tell what I knew for fear of the consequences to myself.

"Of course the longer I kept silent the more impossible it became to make known my part in that night's work, so I never told anyone until this hour that the child of Ernest Grayland and his murdered wife is alive for anything I know to the contrary, and is somewhere in the world today. Your cousin, Evangeline Grayland, if living, is about fifteen years of age, and I hope you will find her and see justice done in restoring her to her rightful place." He ceased speaking and closed his eyes for a moment as though exhausted.

"This is a wonderful story," said Ernest. "I can hardly realise it all. You say this Gypsy girl shot and killed my uncle's wife, and carried off the child, but I don't understand about his death. Did she kill him, too?"

"The shock was what killed him, I expect. Your uncle's wife was standing at a window in her own apartments, looking out upon the front grounds, and the Gypsy girl stood beneath the trees among the shadows, for it was a moonlight night, and she shot her where she stood. She screamed and fell, and in the excitement which naturally followed, Nell managed to get into the house and make off with the child. When your uncle realised that his wife was past all help he sank to the floor and in a few hours he was dead. The doctors said his heart was weak and that the shock was too great for him. Strange, isn't it, that men that love their wives so much are almost sure to lose them, while some man who would be glad to be rid of his wife, and would hail her death with pleasure as a relief from bondage, will be obliged to apply to the divorce court, or else endure her obnoxious presence all his life?"

Ernest smiled at the man's blunt way of expressing himself, but he nodded thoughtfully and said, "Then if my cousin Evangeline is living, it is clearly my duty to find her and restore her to her proper place in the world, and to her own home and fortune. Can you give me any directions as to how to find her?"

"I have not the most remote idea where she is now," answered the man. "I lost all trace of her after the first year. I gave Fannie Dumond (that was the name of the woman I left her with) ten dollars when I left there on that fateful morning, and I sent her ten more in about a month after,

and wrote her a letter telling her to come to the city and get rooms in a certain locality, and I never sent her any more money or letters. I did not go back to her for fear of troublesome questions being asked me, so I lost track of them, and I don't know whether Fannie kept the child after the money played out or whether she cast her off. She might have put her in an orphan asylum. She did not know whose child she was, and whether she heard anything about the murder or not, I cannot say. She might not have thought to associate this child with it if she had. I told her it belonged to a friend of mine, so she probably would not think of such a thing, for you know the Gypsy girl Nell had stated in her letter that she had not only murdered your uncle's wife but she had also strangled the child and buried it in the woods, so you see no one dreamed that it was not dead as she stated. If I hadn't been too much of a coward to tell what I knew, the baby might have been brought home, but I thought that it was risking too much to put myself in the clutches of the law, for I was only a poor nobody, and these people who had been so foully dealt with, were rich and powerful and belonged with the highest in the land.

"I should think you would condemn me for not braving it out and returning the child. You don't express any opinion. Why don't you preach a little? You are not like most of your class if you don't tell others what they ought to do."

There was a note of irritation in his voice which

Ernest was quick to observe, and he was about to speak when the man continued. "Mebby you have got such great contempt for me that you can't say anything that you think severe enough. Or is it that you think I am too sick, too near death to be spoken harshly to? I would as soon anyone would curse me as pity me, and I don't know but rather. I never could bear to be pitied. If you've got any opinion to express you needn't let my condition make any difference. If you think I was a cowardly dog, say so, and don't mince the matter."

"I never was much given to judging other person's actions," replied Ernest gravely. "I was silent only because I was thinking intently of what you were saying. I was putting myself in your place as I have a habit of doing when I hear a story of this kind. I have knocked about the world and seen too much of human nature to be very quick to judge a man. I always put myself in his place first and try to think what I would have done, and how I would have felt under the very same circumstances. If every one did that I don't think they would be so quick to condemn in a great many cases. I can see just how you were situated. You were among the Gypsies at the time this happened, and as you say, they are regarded with a certain amount of suspicion by a certain class. You took into consideration the position of the wronged parties as compared with your own, and you thought that with all their wealth to aid them and public sympathy entirely

on their side, that conviction would surely follow prosecution. Is that not so?"

"That's it to a dot," exclaimed the man. "You've put it in better shape than I could myself."

"Well then," continued Ernest, "if I had been placed in your position I might have done just as you did. This life is full of mistakes and if we could look into the future we might know how to live better, but as the Creator has veiled the future from us I don't see how we can do otherwise than to err in a great many ways. The chances are if you had confessed your part in the events of that fatal night you would be just about finishing out your sentence in prison by this time. The law would demand that someone be punished for the terrible affair, and as the girl was dead and therefore beyond its reach, you would have come next as the victim of public indignation, and notwithstanding what religious people tell us of the triumph of innocence, and of God's tempering the wind to the shorn lamb, we know it is false and that innocence suffers in this world fully as much as guilt, and I think rather more. A lamb would come to grief nine times out of ten, where a wolf would come out unharmed. Anyone with a grain of sense ought to know that from observation.

"And yet, if you could have known what kind of a man my father is, you might have gone to him and told him your story without fear, for so far as he was concerned you would never have been persecuted for your part in that night's work. My

father would have believed you, I am sure. But the people take up a thing like that, you know, and my father could not protect you from their vengeance and you might have been involved in no end of difficulty about it. It is always easy to see mistakes after it is too late to remedy them, but there are more persons who would have done as you did, than there are who would have come forward and risked their safety by a confession."

"Now you're talking sense," said the man, his eyes kindling with satisfaction. "I like to hear a man talk common sense. Religious twaddle makes me sick. What reason have we miserable wretches here on this earth to think that there is a God who cares what happens to us. We are like a lot of flies. We fall into the water or get into the fire and drown or burn or break our bones, we scorch or freeze, starve or die of thirst, and when is there ever a Divine Hand outstretched to save even the most tender and innocent? Christians will tell you to pray and if you ask you shall receive, that if you only have faith you can move mountains, but we know it is a lie, and the missionaries that go to heathen lands to make converts to their own God they put so much faith in, are murdered in the most horrible ways that can be devised. While they are on their knees praying for His help and succor, the savages come along and cut their heads off. If one or two manage by their own shrewdness or efforts, to escape, they begin to thank God as soon as they reach a place of safety, and congratulate themselves that the Divine Hand was

extended to them to assist them and has allowed their companions to perish.

"Why should they flatter themselves that they were any more worthy of God's help than the others who perished? I tell you they are a selfish, narrow-minded lot, and they don't show horse-sense about the things pertaining to life in this world."

"There is much truth in what you say," replied Ernest, "but you should at least give them the credit of trying to benefit their fellow-men as they see it. They make many sacrifices of their own personal comfort in order to go to strange lands as teachers of these savages."

"There is a selfish motive underlying that also," said the man. "They do it either for the glory of it in this world, or with the hope of a higher reward in the hereafter. I tell you I don't believe there is one of them who would sacrifice their comfort for one of those savages if it was only to benefit the savage alone; if they did not expect to be the gainer in some way themselves, either in this world or the next."

Ernest smiled and a mischievous light shone in his eyes. "You think that the missionary makes a tool of the heathen with which to carve a few steps higher on the ladder to reward, or in other words, uses him as a cat's-paw with which to pull his chestnuts from the fire. You think that all the missionary cares about the heathen is to make his conversion the work which is to bring honor and glory among men and a higher place in heaven for the missionary himself."

"That is it exactly," replied the man. "They don't really care any more about the heathen than the sculptor does for his chisel. It is a necessary tool, that is all. He can not do without it the work which is to make him famous."

"That is being done all the time in every walk in life, more or less," said Ernest. "That Gypsy girl used you for her own selfish purpose, when she put upon you the disposal of that child. She worked upon your love for her to carry out her purpose, regardless of what might be the consequences to you. And you in your turn served the girl Fannie in precisely the same manner."

"I don't deny it," said the man, "but I don't profess any religion. I don't believe in the Christian's God. I was talking about the inconsistency of their professions. I don't profess anything in the line of goodness. That makes a difference. I don't claim to be working for anybody's welfare but my own. And I am not conceited enough to think that a special Providence is going to interpose in my behalf."

"I agree with much you say," declared Ernest, "but I have not lost all confidence in humanity. I know that selfishness rules the world in general, but I know there are exceptions, for I have occasionally come across persons whom I thought did things for their fellow-creatures for the sole purpose of making them happy, with no thought of reward for themselves, but it is rather the exception than the rule especially where any sacrifice of comfort is required. But so far as special interpo-

sitions of Providence are concerned, I fully agree with you. I do not believe in a God who would show such partiality as that. This world is so full of misery, wrongs and strife that to believe in that would be perfectly absurd to my mind."

"This world is a place where everything seems to work at cross purposes instead of in harmony," said the man. "That Gypsy girl I loved so devotedly did not love me. She loved a man who did not love her, and the woman, Fannie, loved me but I did not care two straws for her. And so it goes. A man will love some other man's wife, and a woman will prefer some other woman's husband. What we want most is generally something we can't get, and if we do succeed in getting it we soon tire of it and want something which is still beyond our reach. And although that trait is born in the human heart and is a part of the natural law just as much as it is to draw their breath, the very human family in which the trait is characteristic are constantly punishing each other for acting it out."

"Yes, that is true as truth itself," said Ernest reflectively. "And how they are going to be changed for the better is beyond my comprehension."

"I am glad to have met a man of your stamp," said Harnley. "I expected a storm of reproaches for my error, and to find a man like you is a pleasant surprise. I wish I could tell you where to look for your cousin Evangeline, but I cannot direct you in the least. Will restoring her to her rightful position affect you any financially?"

"If it did it would not make the slightest difference. My father has enough for us both. I shall search for her in every way I can. What sort of woman was this Fannie Dumond?"

"She was a good girl in those days; a warm-hearted, kindly woman, not thirty years old quite, I think. She had been married more than once. Three times I think, but she was a widow at the time she took the child."

He then proceeded to give Ernest all the information he could, as to her life and place of residence at the time of his last visit to her, and expressed a hope that he would be successful in his search, as Ernest rose to depart.

As he passed out of the tent a sudden thought struck him and he turned back. "Isn't there something I can do for you, Harnley?" he asked. "Would a little help, financially, make you any more comfortable? If so, just say the word and you shall have it as soon as I can get it to you."

"Thank you," said the man. "I am not in want of anything but health, and that I shall never have again. My days are numbered and they number very few."

Out in the sunshine the old woman who had accosted him upon his arrival awaited Ernest. With a pleasant smile he held out his hand. She took it and looked thoughtfully into the palm. "I don't read all from the hand alone," she said. "I see many things besides what is written there. You will fall in love, and the girl will be worthy of you, but you will be misled in your estimation

of her by a false friend. A female who wants you herself will misrepresent to you the girl you love and cause you intense misery, for a short time. But it will all come right through your own goodness of heart. Where a more narrow-minded, selfish man would fail, through your own nobility of character you will find happiness."

She dropped his hand, and with a smile and a word of thanks he left her. He found Rocket still among an admiring group of horse-lovers, and many words of rough but sincere approval were showered upon the beautiful animal, as his master mounted him and nodding pleasantly to the Gypsies rode away.

"I have an undertaking on my hands that promises to be a long and arduous one," mused Ernest as he rode along. "I must try by every means in my power to find Evangeline Grayland. Who knows what may have been her fate ere this? What if I should find her among a degraded class? Who knows what kind of training her young mind has received during the tender years of her childhood? How surprised father will be. Strange that he never hinted this matter to me. Well, I will do all I can to find her and I will begin the search at once."

He took the road which would lead to the haunted house with a new feeling of interest in the place. How to account for the strange occurrence of the night before was a mystery he could not fathom, but an irresistible fascination caused him to turn Rocket in at the gate, and once more he

approached the great lonely pile, and dismounting entered the side door. He lingered long in the silent rooms, going carefully over the house with a reverential feeling, now that he knew all the sad story, and lingered longest in the room which contained the portrait of the beautiful Mrs. Grayland. He studied the features until he felt sure he could not forget them, "For Evangeline may resemble her mother," he said as he turned to depart.

CHAPTER VI.

The inmates of the Lexington farmhouse slept longer than usual the morning after the visit to the haunted house.

Job was the first one to awake, and soon after he had gone out to do the "chores" the little maid appeared and began preparations for breakfast. Then Tom made his appearance, and after waiting rather impatiently for Cecil and Jessamine to come down, he went up and rapped at their door. Cecil asked what was wanted. "Breakfast is almost ready," he replied. "Aint you ever goin' to get up?"

"Tell Sarah I wish her to bring our breakfast up here," she said.

Tom gave a long, low whistle. "Guess Cecil is gettin' too high-toned fer this place," he remarked, as he went slowly down to the kitchen. "I guess it's all owin' to her meetin' and visitin' with those two city folks." He repeated to the astonished Sarah what Cecil had said.

"Well, that beats my time," said the girl bristling with indignation. "Because my folks are poor and I have to work is no sign I've got to wait on her as if I was a lackey. If that sister of yours never

gets anything more to eat till I bring her breakfast to her bedroom she will get mighty hungry, you can tell her that. If she gets anything to eat today she will come to the table or get it herself."

Tom went back and told Cecil that Sarah would not bring the breakfast up. "Impudent thing!" said Cecil, "she ought to have her ears boxed. Do you ever box their ears, Jessamine?"

"No, indeed," said Jessamine in surprise. "I would never think of it. If I had to work I should not want anyone to strike me."

"Of course, that would be absurd," said Cecil, "but there is a great difference between you and I and such creatures as Sarah."

"I am very fond of our servants," said Jessamine. "Some of them have been in our family ever since I can remember, and they are all so good, especially the ones who have been with us the longest. They were devoted to mamma, and since she died they try to do everything for my comfort, for they seem to know how lonely I am without her."

"But your servants do not expect to be treated as your equals," said Cecil. "What provokes me most with Sarah is that she acts as though she thinks she is just as good as anybody. She expects us to treat her as an equal. You never have that to annoy you, I'm sure."

"Oh, no. Our servants always keep in their proper places. They would never think of taking undue liberties. I believe in different classes keeping within the boundary lines of the sphere to

which they belong. Some people are always preaching about social equality, but we know that that is all nonsense. Who among us would want our cook or coachman to belong to our club? It would be perfectly absurd. This idea that all men are born equal is ridiculous. We know better than that. Some have intellect and talent, while others are stupid, ignorant and vicious, naturally, and no amount of cultivation will raise them beyond a certain point. And there are some who will rise in spite of all kinds of difficulties. There are some men and women born with such an amount of intellect and genius that nothing can keep them down; they will climb up in the very face of discouragements that would crush others who possessed less of their intellectuality and perseverance.

"I admire a man or woman who rises from obscurity through their own efforts. I would be the first to applaud cooks or coachmen who had shown themselves to be mentally superior to that position and worked their way up until they were far above it. But while they were cooks or coachmen I should be just as much disgusted as anyone could be if I saw them trying to force their way into the society of a class that was far above them. Let cooks and coachmen and laundresses associate with cooks and coachmen and laundresses as long as they remain in that sphere. But if a cook, coachman, or laundress has brains and perseverance enough to make their fortune, then let them take their place among the higher class, and all honor to them, I say.

"But I must tell you an amusing incident which happened to a friend of Aunt Anna's. This woman was in moderate circumstances, neither rich nor poor. She associated with her own class, people who were also in moderate circumstances, people who have small stores, small places of business, those who are in offices, and hold positions where they get comfortable salaries; about what one would call the middle class, but not the class who go out to service by any means. Well, auntie's friend had been urged to join a lodge, by a friend of hers, who wanted her to belong to it because she did. Auntie's friend hesitated about joining and asked who were among the members. Her friend named a few very good people who were in every way suitable associates for one in her class. After a little deliberation and upon being assured that the lodge in question was very particular whom they admitted to membership, she joined. She found after she had attended a few of the meetings that there were a number who were not up to the standard of the rest of the membership, but she thought that if any objectionable names were brought in that it would be the easiest thing in the world to keep them out by the ballot, for she supposed that was what the ballot-box was for; so that one would not be obliged to express any opinion in words in regard to a candidate. She was told that if a member objected to the election of a candidate all they had to do was to put in a 'black-ball.'

"After a while a woman joined the lodge; a woman whose husband was rising in business; but

what her ideas of society were it would be hard to say, for this Mrs. Upperwool had not been in the lodge long when she proposed the name of her washerwoman for membership. I think she must have been a sort of socialist or she would not have wanted the woman to join the same lodge to which she herself belonged. Well, there was consternation when the candidate's name was read, and it became generally known in the lodge that it was Mrs. Upperwool's washerwoman. Many and various were the remarks which the members made to each other—in confidence, of course. They did not like the idea of offending Mrs. Upperwool, but the majority of them did not want the washerwoman to get into the lodge. One woman said that she thought it an insult to them for Mrs. Upperwool to propose such a thing. One suggested that they admit the washwoman to membership so as to get her to wash dishes whenever they had an entertainment and not have to pay her. Another proposed that they all snub her so that she would not care to come to the meetings, but would stay away and pay her dues just the same. 'Yes,' said one, 'for her money will be just as good as anybody's.' A woman who was inclined to be suspicious was heard to remark that the best way to keep her out was to find something against her character; but there were two or three who declared that they were not enough interested in washerwomen's characters to spend any time investigating.

"But auntie's friend said she did not see why they could not keep her out by the use of the bal-

lot-box. It would be the quietest and best way of showing their disapproval of the candidate. So she and two or three of her friends black-balled her. Then there was an exciting time. All those who were not in the secret, wondered who put in the black-balls. Mrs. Upperwool's naturally plain face was black as a thunder-cloud. They balloted again, and again auntie's friend and her companions put in black-balls. Then there was a perfect babel. They wondered and surmised and conjectured, and suspected the wrong parties, and instead of withdrawing the objectionable name and apologising to the lodge for bringing it in—as she would have done if she had had a grain of common sense—Mrs. Upperwool insisted and persisted in trying to force the lodge to accept the woman. And one would hardly believe it, but she succeeded in intimidating the majority of the members to such an extent that, rather than to offend her, they made such an ado about it that they frightened the ones who were with auntie's friend and they backed out and dared not put in black-balls when at the next meeting the lodge balloted again. So by keeping it going Mrs. Upperwool succeeded in forcing her washwoman into the lodge. But auntie's friend was disgusted and sent in her resignation. She now wonders what ballot-boxes are for. She says she will never join any more lodges for she does not believe in social equality to the extent of associating with washwomen."

While Jessamine had been relating this lady's experience they had been dressing, and soon after

they went down to the table. Sarah, with flashing eyes and a very red face, placed the breakfast on the table before them with more force than was at all necessary and then went out, shutting the door with emphasis.

"That means that we may wait on ourselves," said Cecil. "I will tell mamma, when she gets home, just how unruly she is."

"'Twont do no good," said Tom. "Ma won't turn Sarah off. She'll tell you plainly that you shouldn't put on so many airs over Sarah. Ouch!" as Cecil pressed his foot under the table to check his remarks, which were becoming embarrassing to the role of dignity which she was assuming. She had great respect for the wealth and standing of Jessamine's family, and was stretching a point to keep up an appearance of mistress over maid.

As soon as he was sure that the maid was out of hearing Tom introduced the subject of the adventure of the night before. They discussed the question of the strange occurrence which had so startled them, but could come to no satisfactory conclusion. The flash that had come so suddenly, followed by the peal of thunder, could not have been natural, for the sky was cloudless, and the moon shining brightly. And then the shot followed by the falling body, the terrible cry; the hurrying footsteps, all were in accordance with the story of the tragedy which had made the place desolate.

"That Mr. Grayland is a good feller," said Tom. "I like him first rate. You know his folks, don't you?" addressing Jessamine.

"I am not personally acquainted with them, but I know them by repute. They are an old and very much respected family. They are immensely wealthy but this young man and his father are great travelers, returning home so seldom that their oldest friends hardly ever see them. The old gentleman spends most of his time abroad. I wonder if it can be that they are in any way related to the people who used to live in the haunted house. Their names are the same, for it was only yesterday that I asked Aunt Cindy about it and she told me all the sad story. She said that the name of the man who used to live there was Grayland, and that the brother who came from across the sea, after the murder, was an Egyptologist. Can it be possible that this young man's father was that one?"

"It is strange that the name is the same if he is not," said Cecil. "But no, it can't be the same family or the young man would have said something about it last night, and he did not appear to know any more, nor as much about the haunted house as we did. He did not say one word that would lead anyone to think that he had even heard the story, and he certainly would if he had been of the same family, for the place would now belong to his father. Don't you see?"

"Yes," replied Jessamine, "it seems so, but it is all very mysterious and I don't understand it at all."

"You will probably meet him again," said Cecil, "for he will call and return the money you loaned

him, and he will not dare to leave it with anyone else to give to you, for he has promised to keep the secret of our adventure. So he will put the money into your own hands, and that will give you an opportunity."

"I would not ask him any questions, though," said Jessamine, "but if he volunteers any information, well and good."

"He's a brick," said Tom. "I like him."

"Not long after they finished breakfast, Ely Nayburn drove up to the door and asked if Jessamine was ready to return home with him. She replied that she was, and resisting Cecil's entreaties to stay longer, she got her hat and climbed up beside her uncle.

As they drove homeward the subject uppermost in her mind was the mystery which was puzzling her, and as they were passing the haunted house she suddenly said: "Uncle Ely, do you believe this place is really haunted? Do you believe there ever was such a thing as a real haunted house?"

Uncle Ely started at the sudden and unexpected question, and looked curiously at her.

"Tell me the truth," she persisted. "Do you or do you not give any credence to such reports?"

"Well," he replied slowly, "I can't say I believe in ghosts, but I am not prepared to assert that there is no such thing. When I was a younger man if you had asked me such a question I should have answered positively that there never was any such thing as a haunted house; but as I grow older I find that there are a great many things I

do not know. When a man gets old he comes to the conclusion that he knows very little. When he is about twenty he thinks there is very little that he does not know. I do not believe in ghosts, but if there are such apparitions, my belief or disbelief in them would not make a particle of difference with the fact. Once upon a time people did not believe the earth was round, but it was and had been all the time, and their beliefs made not a straw's difference in the shape of it. I do not believe there is such a thing as a house that is haunted by disembodied spirits, but it may be true for all that. If I should receive good proof that there was, why then I should believe it, for I should have a good reason to."

"How much you are like poor mamma," said Jessamine. "She always told me to never be positive about anything until I knew it beyond a doubt from some proof I had received."

"That is a pretty good rule to go by," replied Uncle Ely. "I think you will make no mistake in following it."

"Did you ever see anything strange at, or about the haunted house?" she asked.

"I saw a figure at the window in the upper story one night; the window where the poor lady was murdered. I was driving by the place when I saw it. It was dressed all in white and looked like the form of a woman, but it might have been of flesh and blood for all I know. The room was lit up behind it and the figure looked just as anyone dressed in white would look if they were stand-

ing in a window with a light in the room behind them."

"Did it frighten you?" she asked.

"No, I can't say it did. I don't see what there is to be afraid of even in a genuine ghost, if there is such a thing. What could they do to harm anybody?".

"I don't know, I'm sure," she replied.

As they arrived home, Cindy came out, her fat face beaming.

"Well, dear," she said, "did you have a nice time?"

"Oh, yes," replied Jessamine, "a very nice time."

"I told Ely that as long as he was goin' over to Squire Brown's on an errand, he might just as well kill one bird with two stones by stoppin' to Lexington's and bringin' you home."

"You mean kill two birds with one stone, don't you, Cindy?" said Ely.

"No, I don't," she snapped. "Nobody could kill two birds with one stone. Ely Nayburn you're the biggest fool I ever see."

"Much obliged, Cindy," he laughed. "Jessamine, you don't get as many compliments as I do."

"She knows more than you do," Cindy retorted.

At that moment the sound of galloping hoofs attracted their attention, and down the road the superb figure of Ernest Grayland, mounted upon his beautiful Rocket, came into view. Stepping behind a tall rosebush, Jessamine watched him approaching, herself hidden by the thick foliage, for she did not wish to be seen by him.

As he passed the house Ely exclaimed: "Well I

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declare! If that aint the very chap I saw at the hotel last night, and that's a fine horse he's got."

Cindy waddled out to the gate as rapidly as her ample proportions would permit and gazed after the now rapidly retreating horseman.

"He rides as if he and the horse were all one," she said. "He makes me think of them pictures of men that are part horse."

"You mean Centaurs, don't you, Cindy?" asked Ely.

"I don't know what you call 'em. You'd have some outlandish name for 'em, I s'pose. But their pictures are in the almanac. I'd like to know who he is, anyhow, and what he's doin' here."

"If you could only travel a little faster you might have got out into the road in time to have stopped him and inquired all about his business. What a pity it is that you are so fat, Cindy."

Her only reply this time was an angry sniff as she walked by him, her whole body bristling with indignation, and Jessamine on entering the house not long after, found her at the sink washing dishes, her round face drawn into an indescribable expression, tears of rage were dropping unheeded into the dishwater, while she rattled the dishes and set them down with such force as to almost break them.

"I just hate him, Jessamine," she sniffed. "He is the meanest man I ever see in all my life."

"Let me wipe the dishes for you," said Jessamine soothingly, "and then you will get them done so much sooner."

Cindy handed her the dishtowel reluctantly. "I never can make it seem right fer me to let you do such work in my little house, when you are the only daughter of a millionaire."

Jessamine laughed. "What difference does it make whether I am papa's only daughter, or whether he had a dozen others?

"Wal, you needn't make believe that you don't know what I mean, fer you do," Cindy said, smiling through her tears with such a ludicrous expression that Jessamine found it hard to preserve her gravity. "You are a sweet girl, and I think the world of you, but I aint goin' to speak to Ely agin today."

"He does not mean any harm, Aunt Cindy. He does and says lots of things just for fun. Just to tease you."

"You don't know anything about these men, Jessamine. They are meaner than pusley, most of 'em, especially after they are married. And Ely is the very meanest."

Jessamine said no more and after the dishes were done Cindy repaired to her bedroom, which opened off the little sittingroom, still declaring that she would not speak to Ely again that day. "You'll have to call him when dinner is ready, fer I won't," she said emphatically.

Jessamine went out into the little garden and found her uncle bending over a rain-barrel, tenderly lifting a young robin out of the water, where it had fallen in its clumsy efforts to fly. He laid it gently on the grass, and turning, saw her watch-

ing him. "I guess the little feller's all right," he said. "He hadn't more'n fell in before I had hold of him."

The girl's eyes grew moist. "How kind you are," she said. "I wonder how many men would do that."

"Oh, most any of 'em would," he responded cheerfully. "I don't know of any that wouldn't, unless it is Dan Bruler, and nobody expects anything of him."

"Uncle Ely," said Jessamine, laying her hand on his arm, "I wish you would be more careful about joking with Aunt Cindy. She takes everything you say in dead earnest, and she has been crying about what you said when the young man went by."

A peculiar expression flitted over his face. "I know," he said shortly. "I was just outside the window, and I heard her tell you that she would not speak to me again today. Don't mind anything she says or does, my child, for it amounts to nothing."

"But it makes me feel uncomfortable to see anyone in distress, and she seemed to feel very badly about it."

"You don't know her as well as I do," he replied. "If you did you would not give it a second thought. Come with me."

He strode toward the house, the girl following him, wondering in her own mind how a man who could not see a baby robin die unnecessarily could view with such apparent unconcern his wife's tears and distress.

They entered the house, making no comment, and Ely went into the sitting-room, Jessamine standing in the doorway.

"Cindy!" he called. There was no reply; only a sniffing sound from the bedroom. "Cindy!" no answer. "Cind—y!" The sniffing ceased, but there was still no answer. "Cindy, I stopped at the bank today and got some money. Don't you want some of it?"

There was the sound of a hasty plunge and a chair toppling over, and Cindy appeared in the bedroom door-way, all smiles, her round face, red with recent tears, but now beaming with delight. "Why, of course I do, Ely," she said joyfully. "I didn't hear you the first three times you called me."

"Then how did you come to know that I had called you three times before you answered, if you did not hear me?" he asked, handing her a roll of bills.

He turned and gave Jessamine a look which proved too much for her self-control, and she turned hastily away to hide the laugh which would come in spite of all efforts to suppress it.

CHAPTER VII.

"There is something which has puzzled me ever since I have been here," said Jessamine, "and I am no nearer to a solution of it than I was at first." She was lying in a hammock on the side porch, while Ely sat on the step busily employed in fixing a piece of harness. It was a hot, sultry afternoon, and Cindy had gone to bed with a headache, so Jessamine and Uncle Ely were alone on the porch.

"What is it?" he asked. "Maybe I can help you a little."

"I have been studying how I can help old Mr. and Mrs. Brown and not have them know it; for you know how sensitive they are about anything that looks like charity, and also how destitute they are, and it is just such ones who always awaken my sympathy. I think they are much more worthy of assistance than people who are always asking for it. Now I have some of my allowance left, for papa was more generous than usual this time because I was going on a visit, and I would like so much to give them some, just a little you know, and do it in some way that would not wound their sensitive feelings, and I can't think of any way. I got a letter from papa

this morning and he wants me to come home Saturday, and this is Wednesday, so you see I haven't much more time."

Ely looked thoughtfully at her for a moment; then he said: "Well, it would never do to offer them anything outright, for they would only feel humiliated, and I don't know of anybody in Greendell who needs help any more than they do, for they have only one dollar a week to live upon over and above what the old man earns. But of course they do not have any rent to pay, and they have their little garden, and there are some fruit trees on the place, but it is a pretty small sum for them to squeeze along on, and not go hungry. They have seen better days. They both belong to well-bred, high-spirited families, and they are just the kind who would force a smile to hide the pangs of starvation. As long as it is possible to exist without help, they will, and if the time ever comes when they are obliged through sickness or accident to accept charity it will be bitter as death to them both. So you see how difficult it is to reach them."

"Oh, but those are just the ones who most deserve help. I have a great sympathy for them, for I know just how they feel. I should feel the very same, and it distresses me to see such people suffer. I don't care one-half so much about helping beggars, but I am determined to do a little something for Mr. and Mrs. Brown before I go home."

"Well, there is one way that I have in mind, and you are such a bright girl, Jessamine, I believe

you could carry it out successfully; but if you got caught at it you would be placed in a very embarrassing position. If you would take a handful of small change; fifty cent pieces, quarters, dimes and nickels and go there some afternoon when the old man was out of doors, and take the opportunity every time the old lady turned her back, to slip a coin into the sewing machine drawers, and into her work-basket, and on the shelf over the kitchen table, and about the rooms in different places, being careful to put only one piece in each place, I don't believe they would ever know that it was not money which they had put there themselves and forgotten, for they are very forgetful, and you see they would not find these pieces of money all at the same time. They would come across them at different times and wonder how they came to forget that they had put them there. I dropped a fifty cent piece in her work-basket one day when she went to the door to call the old gentleman, whom I wanted to see, and when she came back, and sat down to her sewing, she looked in the basket for her thimble, and when she saw the half dollar she said: 'Why, I didn't know I put that there. How forgetful I am. I wonder how long that has been in the bottom of that basket? I am getting so forgetful, I must be more careful. I am always laying things down, and forgetting where I put them. That must have been there a good while,' and she got up and got her purse and put the money in it with such a pleased look I am sure she thought it some of her own. So you

might try my method, but be very careful, for to get found out would spoil it all."

"Oh, uncle, you're a brick," cried Jessamine, enthusiastically. "I'll do it and not get caught, never fear. I might have known that you would think of some way. How much you are like poor mamma."

"Well, I ought to be some like her, I'm her only brother, so it is not surprising that I should resemble her a little. So your father says you must come home Saturday?"

"Yes," she replied, "he and Aunt Anna have got home, so I suppose I shall have to go; but I have been very happy here, and I am in no hurry to leave."

"And I am in no hurry to have you go, Jessamine. You brighten up the place like sunshine, and I wish you could live with us; but I know that our little home and this little village is hardly a fitting place for a girl who will occupy the place in the world that you will. But there is one thing I am pretty sure of, and that is that the great world of fashionable society will never spoil my little Jessamine, for you are your mother over again."

"No," she replied, "I don't care much for society in general. I like to be with my friends—my real friends, you know—those who really like me for myself, and not for what papa is worth. I know that there is more insincerity and hypocrisy in this world than truth and honesty, and that there are very few who have a really unselfish regard for

one. I used to have long talks with mamma before she died, and she told me a great deal about the world, and warned me against certain things. One thing I remember most of all because she was so very earnest about impressing it upon my mind. She said to me one day: 'Jessamine, remember this —that only the deepest, strongest love can justify the marriage relation, and never allow anyone to force you into a marriage with a man you do not love with all your heart. If you meet a man you think you love, wait a year or two and see if the affection you feel for him remains as deep and strong as at first, and then if you feel sure that you can never be happy without him, marry him and be true to him through life; but do not marry a man you think you love, without plenty of time for deliberation, for fancy is not love, but is often mistaken for it at first, and above all things never allow your father to persuade you to marry a man for money or a title. Be firm on that point and I shall be much more reconciled to die, if I can be sure that my little girl will do as her heart dictates.'"

"And you will do as your mother advised in spite of any circumstances which may be brought to bear upon you to make you do otherwise?" asked Uncle Ely anxiously.

"Yes," she answered solemnly, "through thick and thin, regardless of anything or anybody, I shall do as mamma advised."

"It is well," he replied, "and if you ever need a champion, I'll be one that you may depend upon. Remember that."

"Thank you," she said, reaching out and clasping his large, strong hand. "I shall come straight to you if I ever need one, for I know you will not fail me. But, Uncle Ely, why is it that there are so many unhappy marriages?"

"A great deal of the trouble comes from the very thing your mother warned you against; mistaking fancy for love. The law allows boys and girls in their teens to marry if they wish. Now what does a boy or girl of that age know about choosing a companion for life? The very one they would fancy then might be perfectly obnoxious to them a few years later. For instance—the girl a boy of twenty would take a liking to, might have nothing to recommend her but a fair complexion, a plump form, a jolly way, red lips, white teeth, and a tendency to laugh at everything he said. That, in nine cases out of ten, would be sufficient to arouse his interest in and make him admire her. She might not possess a teaspoonful of common sense, but he would not see that. If he was to wait until he was thirty before he married her, by that time he would see all her inferiority when compared with some other women, and could not be hired to marry her, and after a time her plumpness would develop into a shapeless mass of flesh, and her complexion grow brown and leathery; the tendency to laugh would turn to a positive talent for faultfinding, her pretty teeth would become a lot of decayed and broken snags through her slovenly neglect of them. Her lack of intellect would show—in the absence of any outer attraction—with

glaring prominence, and he would find himself tied for life to a stupid, grumbling clod, from whom there would be no escape but death. For unless he could prove her to be grossly unfaithful to him, he would have to stand it, according to the law of New York State.

"Perhaps that is justice, but I think that a lifetime of misery in bondage is a heavy penalty to pay for an act committed in youthful folly and thoughtlessness. At least it looks that way to me. Most people consider that virtue—chastity—is all, or most to be desired in a woman; that if she is chaste she must be near perfection, but I tell you, Jessamine, there are other things to be desired in either man or woman. I sometimes think if I had to choose between two women, one of which was a stupid, slovenly, ignorant, repulsive looking, yet virtuous one, and the other a bright, intelligent, well groomed, fine looking woman who was inclined to gaiety and recklessness, I would take the latter and run the chances of her making me happier than the other one would. For I do think that brains are more to be desired than anything else in this world.

"Think of it, my child. If one has brains—a bright, intelligent manner—even though we know them to be very faulty, we cannot help feeling a certain admiration for them. There is an homage which we must pay to intellect wherever we meet with it, even though we do not approve of the use to which it is being put by the one who possesses it. Now on the other hand, what respect or hom-

age can we pay to a stupid, thick-headed, narrow-minded clod, under any circumstances? It makes no difference if they are perfectly honest, virtuous and inoffensive members of the community. We feel a sort of contemptuous pity for them; a pity which is strongly tinctured with disgust. Is it not so? If a person has intellect there is something to admire. If they haven't, what is there? Nothing."

Jessamine smiled. "There is much truth in what you say," she said. "But perhaps if you were to hear the opinion of a man who had suffered from the gaiety and infidelity of an attractive, brilliant woman, his great cry would be, 'give me virtue above all else, even though it be accompained by ugliness and stupidity. Anything! Anything but such recklessness!'"

"Yes," he replied, "there is no doubt of that. But on the other hand, if a man should have both experiences; should live five years with one and then five years with the other, and was then compelled to choose the one he would take for the third period, I am positive he would choose the gay and reckless one. He would at least have something attractive, and his greatest anxiety would be the fear that some other man would want her, and try to take her from him. While if he took the stupid, unattractive one because she was good and virtuous, he would soon fear that he wouldn't lose her, for there would be no attraction for him or anyone else, and even her stolid, home-staying virtues would appear to him but the result of excessive mental sluggishness, and

credit her virtue only to lack of temptation and opportunity to be otherwise."

"Well, I give up and confess I am beaten in a fair argument," said Jessamine, laughing. "I never thought of it in just that light before. But I admit that I could stand anything else better than I could dullness of intellect. We know, of course, that one is not to blame for lack of brains, but that knowledge does not make their companionship any more agreeable. For if one is intellectual, no matter what their morals are, they amount to something, while if one is an idiot and is ever so good, they amount to nothing. But there must be something wrong with the marriage laws or there would not be so much unhappiness. How would you fix it, Uncle Ely, if you had it to do."

"I don't know," he replied. "It is a very big question. If a man has lots of money and he does not wish to live with his wife, he can provide her with a separate establishment, and a good many do; but if a man has not enough to keep up two places of residence, one for her, and another for himself, there is no alternative but to run away and go so far that she cannot have him brought back, or to grin and bear it at home, or if he can't grin he can bear it or go out and knock himself in the head. But if he gets tired of life and tries to kill himself, he has got to make a success of it, or she can have him arrested for that—for suicide is unlawful—so you see it is a pretty serious affair, this getting married. One is taking a big contract on one's hands when one stands up

and promises to love and honor the one chosen, for no one knows whether he can fill the contract even if he tries his very best."

"That was just what mamma said," replied Jessamine. "She told me that no one could tell whether they could fulfill what they were promising at the altar, no matter how sincere their intentions might be. But don't you think there are any happy marriages?"

"Oh, yes, there is an occasional case where the love was the genuine article on both sides. I have known perhaps half a dozen cases of that kind during my lifetime, but not more than that. There are a good many who are quite happy for a few years, but something generally comes between them sooner or later that cools their love and makes them wish for their freedom. I have never known more than a very few cases where they remained loving and loyal even into old age. The old couple whom we were speaking of, old Mr. and Mrs. Brown, are one of the few. They are perfectly devoted to each other."

"How lovely that is," said Jessamine. "Such a marriage is what marriage ought to be. But I do not think that either man or woman ought to be bound by law to live with one who has become loathsome to them in any way just because they were so foolish as to marry them when they did not know them as they really were. There ought to be some way out of such a bondage. It is barbarous for a person to have his or her whole life spoiled, their existence made wretched, by

another fellow-creature. That is the very worst kind of slavery."

"What is it that is such awful slavery?" said a familiar voice, and looking up they saw Cindy standing in the doorway. Her head was tied up in a red bandana handkerchief, and her feet encased in a pair of old slippers belonging to Ely. "What are you two talking about now?"

"Jessamine was just remarking that she thought marriage one of the greatest frauds ever gotten up to impose upon the human race," said Ely, turning to Jessamine with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Why, dear, what put such a wrong idea into your pretty head?" asked Cindy. "You are much mistaken about that. What would become of folks if they couldn't git married? Now there's Ely, what would he do without me? He thinks there aint anybody else in this world like me, don't you, Ely?"

"I'm dead sure there isn't," he replied. There never was, nor ever will be."

"And if we had our lives to live over again," she continued, "we would git married just the same as we did. You know I would marry you again if I had it to do over, don't you, Ely?"

"I don't believe you would, Cindy," he replied. "In fact I'm quite sure you wouldn't."

"Yes, I would. Don't you pay no attention to what he says, Jessamine, he knows I would, but he likes to make believe that he don't think so. But don't you let anybody set you up against marryin', fer it was the way God intended folks to

do. When I see an old bach or an old maid, I think to myself, 'well, there's a fool, and a big one, too.' I think everybody ought to git married, and they'd have to if I made the laws, fer I wouldn't have no old maids nor baches around a-moonin' along alone. I'd make 'em git married."

"I suppose you would tie them together haphazzard whether they were suited with each other or not, wouldn't you, Cindy? What a blissful state of affairs you would have in a short time. What if they got so sick and tired of each other that they ran away; would you allow them to live as grass widows?"

"No," she replied, "if there is anything that is even worse than an old maid or bach it is a grass widow or widower. I wouldn't have no divorces. I think they are the invention of Satan. I say as folks make their beds let 'em lie in 'em. If they don't know enough to pick out a decent pardner let 'em make the best of it. Don't the ceremony say 'for better or worse,' and 'whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder?' Aint that plain enough? God don't like such doin's as divorces. It's against His wishes."

"How do you know what God wishes?" said Ely. "Are you in direct communication with Him? You talk as though you had your information straight from headquarters."

"I guess I know what sin is, Ely Nayburn, and it would be a good deal more to your credit if you did. You're the biggest fool I ever see in all my life," she snapped, as she waddled back into the house.

The next day Jessamine proceeded to carry her plan of helping old Mr. and Mrs. Brown into execution. She walked out to their humble cottage, which was situated on the very outskirts of the village. This old couple were alone in the world, excepting for distant relatives. The little place they called home had been willed to them by a relative, together with fifty-two dollars a year. As there was half an acre of ground with it, on which were some fruit trees, they managed by raising a few vegetables to get enough to live upon, but it barely supplied them with food and shelter, while other comforts were sadly lacking, and their own sensitive pride stood in the way of their accepting charitable donations. They were both of good birth and breeding, and had been reared in plenty, and now in their old age, through a series of misfortunes they were reduced to pinching poverty.

The old lady was sitting on the little porch when Jessamine came up the walk. She greeted her warmly, for the girl was more like those with whom she had associated in happier years.

There was an air of refinement about this little home which had always pleased Jessamine. They sat on the porch and chatted for some time, and she began to wonder how she could manage the errand upon which she had come, when the old lady arose and remarking that she had forgotten to put out any water for the chickens, asked Jessamine to excuse her for a few moments. "Go into the sitting-room and you will find that volume of

Natural History you like so much, right there on the stand, and I will soon be back," she said, as she went out to the chickens.

This was Jessamine's opportunity, and before the old lady returned she had distributed five dollars in small change about the house, and was quietly looking at the book referred to when Mrs. Brown came in. Not long after she bade her friend good bye and departed with a heart made light by her success, for she knew that the old lady would discover the pieces at different times and never suspect the truth. "I should never have thought of that method if it hadn't been for Uncle Ely," she said to herself. "How I wish his home life was happier."

The next day she went to the Lexington farm house to pay a farewell visit to Cecil. The two girls went to Cecil's room, and there, curled up in great easy chairs, they chatted of everything dear to girlish hearts. Jessamine asked Cecil to come up to the city and visit her, and with a heart beating high with joy and gratification, Cecil promised to do so. It had been the dream of her life to visit such a home and such people as Jessamine's. The luxury and grandeur of such a life was more to her taste than anything else on earth. She had planned and worked for this invitation. All that had ever induced her to consent to that visit to the haunted house was a desire to please Jessamine in everything. Now she felt that her efforts had been rewarded. All the fright and misery she had suffered that night were as nothing when

weighed in the balance with the realization of her desires. She looked so radiant that Jessamine noticed it and wondered at it. She had never seen her in such high spirits. Her eyes were bright with triumph, her cheeks flushed, and her manner that of a person exhilarated by too much stimulant.

"Oh! Jessamine!" she said. "There is one thing I always thought I would like to do if I ever came up to the city to stay a few days, and that is to go slumming. I have read so much about it, and I am so interested in poor people, anyway, that I know I should enjoy it more than all else. It must be so satisfying to go into their homes, which are so bare and cheerless, and help them and hear them bless you for it. I suppose you go often. I know you would be interested in such grand, noble work."

Jessamine looked surprised. "Well, no," she said, "I can't say that I am much interested in such work. A number of women in auntie's set go often, and have asked me to go, but I never went slumming with them. But there is one friend of auntie's who goes almost every day, and I will introduce you to her and she will be delighted. I don't think I was ever intended for a missionary. Auntie's friends tell us their experiences and that is enough for me. The wretches she describes take one's money and whine for more, and as soon as one's back is turned they spend it for vile liquors, and in drunken brawls and fights, and they are disgustingly filthy and fiendishly cruel, both to human beings and animals. Some of them would

torture an animal just for pastime—just for the fiendish pleasure of seeing it suffer.

"I think one day will be enough for you, Cecil, but I want you to do just what you think you would enjoy most, and auntie's friend will go with you, and our carriage and John will be at your disposal, and then evenings we can go to the opera or theater. We can't go to balls and society functions for I am not out yet. I have not yet passed the portals of fashionable society, but we can go to lots of entertainments, and I think I can make it pleasant for you even though I am not yet in society."

"Oh, I am sure we shall have a perfectly heavenly time," replied Cecil, "but I supposed the missionary work would be just the thing you would be the most interested in. I don't believe I would want to give much to such people as you describe, but if I went into the slums to do any good, I should try and find the worthy poor. Those who were clean, refined and deserving."

Jessamine laughed. "You would look for such ones as you have read about; widows who worked hard to support some small children, and you would expect to find the house scrupulously clean and neat, and the children all dressed in clean, patched frocks, sitting in a row studying some good books which had been sent to them from a Sunday school. That was something like your idea of it, wasn't it?"

"Well, yes, something like that, only not quite so much so. But I should not care to help a

vicious, wicked class. I should want them to be neat and refined."

"But that would not be slumming," said Jessamine. "I don't say that there are never such families in the city slums, but I do say that they are very rarely met with. I think that the best way to help the very poor, is to give them the opportunity to help themselves by furnishing them with some kind of work, and paying them well for doing it. I have noticed that people who are the most worthy of help are generally the ones who try to help themselves by getting employment, and making themselves so useful to their employers that they hold their places and earn enough to live upon, and some of that class, although poor and obliged to do without many comforts, are too sensitive and proud to accept charity. They do not live in the dirty, filthy districts of the worst slums. You will find that the class who are always ready to tell their troubles and wheedle you into giving, are least deserving. They will take all you will give and ask for more. But there is nothing like seeing these things for yourself. Come and make me a good long visit and I will undertake to manage so that you will see all the sights."

They said good bye, and Tom came out and walked home with Jessamine in the gathering twilight.

CHAPTER VIII.

In a bright, cozy room in an apartment house, situated in a certain street which bore a very evil reputation, a woman and young girl, scarcely more than a child, were sitting before a fire which had been lighted in the grate for the purpose of toasting the bread for their tea. The woman was past her prime so far as beauty went, and looked faded and weary and worn, but the girl was a beauty, just entering upon her brightest and best years. About fifteen years of age, and though yet undeveloped she gave promise of great loveliness of face and form, and added to that was a high-bred grace, an aristocratic bearing, a pride and intelligence which lent the chief charm and fascination to her every motion. She was as unlike her companion as the thoroughbred is unlike his commonplace brother, but that there was a great affection existing between them one could not doubt, for it shone in their faces and was expressed in the tones of their voices whenever they addressed each other.

The young girl was watching the toast and turning it occasionally, and the woman leaned back in her chair and looked at the girl with a smile of admiration in her faded eyes.

"That is done enough, Eva," she said at last, "you have browned it beautifully. You would make a famous little housekeeper if you were ever obliged to work; which I hope you never will be," she added with a sigh. "You shall never be a drudge if I can prevent it, dearest. I shall try to manage for you better than that, my own."

The girl looked up with a merry smile. "It would be no worse for me to work than it is for all those girls who go home from the shops and factories at half past five every night, would it?

"Dick's father says you spoil me, Fanchette. He says you are bringing me up for something worse than work. I am afraid you are too good to me, for just think how you have always petted me."

The older woman's face darkened, her eyes flashed and she bit her lips to suppress an exclamation of intense anger. Eva was busying herself in arranging the toast on a plate so that she did not notice her companion's emotion.

They sat down to a dainty little tea-table, and having calmed herself, Fanchette said: "So Dick's father said that to you, did he?"

"Yes," replied Eva, "he said that there were worse things than work, and you were bringing me up for them."

"The old beast!" cried Fanchette. "I wonder what he considers worse? He made a drudge and slave of Dick's mother until she died from the effects of the hardships he heaped upon her. But she was his wife, and therefore of less value in his eyes than a horse would be if he owned one. I

tell you, Eva, men are brutes, fiends, every one of them. I would rather see you laid in your grave than the wife of the best one of them. They no sooner become the lawful possessor of a woman than they begin to tire of her, and want some other, some one who is just beyond their reach. Some other man's wife, for instance. They will treat their own wife with indifference and contempt, sometimes with personal violence, even, because she belongs to them. From the moment the knot is tied her reign is over and done; from that time she becomes second, third, or fourth as the case may be, while some woman whom he does not own becomes of absorbing interest to his brute admiration."

Eva looked at her with a little amused smile. "How you hate them, don't you, Fanchette," she said. "I don't see how you can allow any one of them to visit you. I should think your detestation of them would show in all your efforts to conceal it. How do you manage to deceive them as you do? You make them think that you love and admire them. How can you?"

"It is our bread and butter, Eva. My child, you will understand some time. I could never have kept you so comfortable and well-dressed and paid a tutor to instruct you if I had had to go out and work for our maintenance. But I had experience enough with marriage before I ever took you to care for. I have been married three times, and the first one was a drunkard and used to come home and beat me. The second was a gambler and he

would leave home for days at a time, when he was down on his luck, and if I had no money to buy bread with I had to go out and earn it any way I could. Then when he was flush he would come home and stay a while, until the money was about gone, and then decamp again.

"The third one used to go across the street and make love to another woman almost in plain sight of my window. When I remonstrated with him he choked me and kicked me down stairs. That was the last day I lived with him. But after all that experience I was foolish enough to get quite fond of a man who traveled with a band of Gypsies, and I believe I would have been fool enough to have married him if he had not served me a low-lived trick. That was the man who brought you to me, Eva, and begged of me to take you in, promising me that he would furnish money for your support. He gave me ten dollars down, and sent me ten dollars once after that, and asked me to move to the city with you, and that was the last I ever heard from him. He deserted you, a helpless infant, and I had to provide for you as best I could.

"Oh, they are a contemptible race, these men. All they care for in this world is their own gratification. If they are comfortable, and their wants supplied, they do not care about the sufferings of any other creature. Some of them enjoy making others suffer."

"Do you suppose that man who left me in your care was my father?" asked Eva. Her great, dark

blue eyes were fixed with an expression of horror on Fanchette's face as she listened to her story.

"No, indeed!" replied Fanchette, scornfully. "Why, my dear child, you are no more like him than sunshine is like a dirty fog.

"There is none of his vile blood in your veins, my darling. Of that I feel sure."

"But where did he get me? How did I come to be in his possession at that age?"

"That is a mystery I could never fathom, for his explanation of why he wished me to take you was not very clear, but he took me so by surprise that almost before I knew what had happened he had left you and the ten dollars and strode out of the house. I received a letter from him afterwards, containing ten dollars more, and requesting me to come to the city, and reside on a certain street he named and he would come there to see me soon. I did as he requested and never saw or heard from him again. But before I had you with me a month I loved you so well I would have worked my fingers to the bone before I would have given you up. But I found that there are easier ways of living than to work and drudge, and after a time I moved into a part of the city where I was surrounded by my own class, the class who have learned that men who are stingy and mean with their wives are generous with a mistress, and we are very comfortable, aren't we, dearest?"

Eva rose and going to Fanchette's chair put her arms about her neck and kissed her lovingly. "Dear, dear Fanchette," she said, "if you had been

less good, and more hard hearted you would have sent me to an orphanage or some charitable institution and not bothered with me. What a burden I have been. How kind you have always been to me."

"You are not a burden, you are the greatest comfort and treasure I have in life!" cried Fanchette, and something like tears gathered in her faded, blue eyes. "But, Eva," she said, hesitatingly, "we will have to economize soon, for my friends are not as generous as they once were, and I have seen my best days, I fear. I am getting past my prime for lovers, and I never was as fascinating as you will be. You are going to be a great beauty, my dear, and can catch higher game than I ever could, even in my best days. I used to be pretty, but you will be gloriously beautiful, and added to that, you have an air of high breeding that cannot fail to win men of higher standing in the world than I was ever able to. You will soon be old enough to choose a lover for yourself, and then we can live better than we do now, for no man can resist you, my pet, when you ask him for money or jewels. You will have more than I ever had, I am sure."

"And then I can keep you in grand style in return for what you have done for me, all these years. I must have cost you a great deal. But have you no idea who I belonged to—who my parents were?"

"No, I haven't the faintest suspicion of any one. I only feel very sure that you came of rich people,

for your little garments were very fine, and you wore a diamond ring and a baby pin set with real pearls, engraved with the name Evangeline. So I always called you Eva, but I have not the faintest idea who you belonged to. Only one person knows and that is the man who brought you to me. If he is still living, and we ever find him, we will try to get the truth from him. That will be the only way we can ever find out."

A rap at the door interrupted the conversation, and there entered a youth about a year younger than Eva. He was a beautiful boy, with a bright, sunny face and pleasant manner. He carried in his arms a dog which he placed gently on the soft rug which Eva hastened to bring him for that purpose. "Here we are again to beg your protection," he said gaily. "I don't know what I should do with old Tipsy if it wasn't for you."

"Is the old man on the rampage again tonight?" asked Fanchette, stooping to pat the dog's head.

"Yes," replied the boy, "I guess you'd think so if you were in there," jerking his thumb in the direction from which he had come. "If Tip could get out of his way like he could when he was a young dog, I wouldn't have to bother you, but he is getting weaker all the time now, and can't get out of his way, and I'd rather he'd thrash me than to lay a finger on him. I'm afraid if he should hurt Tip I'd forget that he is my step-father and strike him. So to avoid that, it's better to get out and stay out till he cools down."

"The old reprobate," muttered Fanchette, "some-

body ought to strike him dead. He's lived too long already." But aloud she said: "Dick, whenever you want to come in here and stay with us you may rest assured we are glad to have you come and bring Tip. Have some supper, do, its still warm."

"No, thank you," he laughed, "we have been living high just lately.

"The old gent had good luck a few days ago and got quite a pile, and we've been living on the top shelf since. He gave me ten dollars when he felt good natured, but he will ask for it again when this wad is spent, and he gets hard up."

"And I hope you won't be foolish enough to give it back to him," said Fanchette.

"No, I know better than that. I always tell him it's spent, and he swears and calls me a wasteful pup, but I hide the money so he can't find it and then when we are in a pinch I use a little of it at a time to get enough for us to eat until he strikes luck again, and when I bring home something I have bought with it he thinks I have stolen or begged it, and then he tells me that I am good for something once in a while."

"Shall you live with him always, Dick?" asked Eva.

A look of determination flashed into the boy's eyes. "No," he replied, "I shall take care of myself, and live by myself some day. But I will never see him starve. I will help him when he is down on his luck, but I shall not live with him much longer."

"He killed your mother, with hard work and abuse," said Fanchette. "Your mother was a lady, and he was the cause of her death just as much as though he had taken a knife and cut her throat. Did you know that, Dick?"

"Yes, I have seen him abuse her when I was too small to defend her. If I had been as big I am now I don't think he would have things all his own way like he used to. But I can remember some things that happened when I was a little chap, because they frightened me so, I suppose."

A loud crash followed by a shout came from the direction of the rooms occupied by Dick and his step-father. "I guess I'd better go back and see if I can persuade him to leave a few things whole. I'll leave Tip here," Dick said, as he went hastily out.

"If ever a man deserved killing, it's that old wretch!" said Fanchette. "They are all bad enough but he is one of the worst. It's a wonder he hasn't killed Dick in some of his drunken rages."

"Dick will look out for him," said Eva. "I'll risk Dick."

About an hour later Dick returned, saying that the old gent, as he always called him, had fallen into a drunken stupor, and that there would be no danger of further violence that night, and taking up his dog and thanking them he said "good night." As they were preparing to retire, Eva, who had been unusually silent for some minutes, turned to Fanchette with a shadow in her lovely eyes. "You tell me that all men are bad," she said. "Do

you believe when Dick gets to be a man he will be bad like all the rest?"

Fanchette was busy and did not detect the wistful tone of Eva's voice and she answered carelessly: "He'll be just like all the rest when he grows up, of course; they are all very much alike, selfish and brutal in some way, every mother's son of them."

Eva drew a great sigh as she crept into bed. "I'm so sorry," she said. "I hoped he'd be different."

The next evening just after tea, someone knocked sharply, and when Fanchette opened the door she uttered a cry of surprise. "Why, Will Evers!" she cried, swinging the door wide open and grasping the hand of the new arrival. "Where on earth did you come from?" The man laughed, and advancing into the room, took her face between his hands and kissed her. "It's about four years since I was here last," he said, taking the chair she offered him, "and I got into town rather late last night, and thinking you might have other company, I thought I'd wait till tonight before I came to surprise you. I left here rather unexpectedly four years ago. Didn't have time to bid my friends good bye. The police were after me and it hurried me some to get to the train before they did. But it wasn't anything serious enough to keep me away always. I knew it would blow over after a bit, so I aint afraid of being meddled with now."

Fanchette gave the man a warning glance and put her finger to her lips; then turning to Eva she

said: "Don't you want to run in and see Dick a little while, dear? I think his 'old gent' is out, and I want to talk over old times with this friend and he might want to tell me some secrets which he would not want you to hear." Eva arose, and with a charming smile, passed out.

"By Jove! is that the little girl you used to have here when I used to come to see you?"

"Yes, that is Eva."

"She's a fine looking girl," he said. "Four years add or subtract a good deal sometimes." His eyes unconsciously expressed his thought as they rested on the faded and weary countenance opposite him. She was quick to see it, and she resented it in her heart, but she only smiled and answered: "Yes, I know I have faded, while Eva has blossomed like a rose. Four years does make a great change sometimes. It has affected you, too, somewhat. You have not escaped entirely."

"Oh, I know," he said testily, "but I am glad to say I am in better shape financially than I ever was before. I have sort of struck it rich, Fan, and now I have come back to take it easy awhile and spend some of it. What do you think of that for a man that never had anything; isn't that quite a show?" He drew from his pocket a bank book, and opening it showed her the figures.

"Why, Will!" she cried, "how on earth did you ever get hold of five thousand dollars?"

"Never mind how," he said, proudly, returning the book to his pocket. "It is enough to say that the police have no reason to hunt me up and that's enough, aint it?"

"Why, yes," she said joyously. "I am glad of that. What are you going to do with all that?"

"I'm going to be a gentleman of leisure, and spend some of it, I tell you," he said laughing. "What are you going to do with that girl, Fan?"

"What girl?" she said absently. She was thinking of the figures in the bank book.

"Why, your girl, Eva. What girl did you think I meant?"

"Oh, I have great plans for Eva. She must win some man who can keep her like a princess. I shall never consent to let her accept anyone of ordinary means. I want her beauty to bring a high bidder."

"Has she ever had any 'friends,' yet?" he asked significantly.

"No! Good gracious, no!" cried Fanchette. "Why, she can't be more than fifteen and a half, I am sure."

"Then you don't know her exact age?" said the man, eyeing her curiously. "Say, Fan, where did you get her, anyhow? Won't you tell me?"

"No, I won't," said Fanchette, "for it isn't any of your business. I took her to bring up, to please a friend of mine, and I'll not tell you or anyone else who that friend was."

"Oh, well, don't get mad and tear your clothes," he said coarsely. "I don't care whether you do or not. I should think you would be looking out for a millionaire to marry her to, you seem to value her so highly."

"You know very well, Will Evers," said Fan-

chette, flushing with anger, "that millionaires or their sons don't come into such a street as this, nor into such houses as mine to choose wives. But Eva is good enough to be the wife of a millionaire. She is good enough to be the consort of a king. You needn't think for a minute that she is guilty because I am. I have kept her so far as innocent as a babe. I have never allowed the men who come to this house to say a vile word before Eva. I have kept her from contact with anything low or evil, and I have educated her by hiring for her a private tutor, an old man who was poor and alone in the world, and who was once a professor in a high school, and had seen better days. I did not want to send her to the public schools because I did not wish her to learn a lot of religious twaddle, neither did I propose to rear her in ignorance, and the result is she has a fine education; has studied everything that is necessary to fit her for life in this world, and that is enough; the next may take care of itself."

"What do you intend to do with her? Find her a husband?"

"A husband!" Oh, the scorn expressed in those two words. "I would rather see her dead than married."

"Why are you opposed to her marrying?"

"I have seen enough of marriage," she said bitterly. "I know that a man soon tires of a woman when once the law says she belongs to him. I know that women are abused and neglected if they are foolish enough to give a man a legal

ownership of themselves. It is a man's nature to always want something which does not belong to him, and to value less every day that which does. I have seen a great deal of that, and I do not mean to have Eva, my one pet lamb, fall into any such trap as that. If she could marry a millionaire, as you suggested, I should raise no objection, because if he did tire of her she could always have luxuries and there would be no danger of her coming to want. But it is impossible for her to ever marry a millionaire for the reasons I before stated—that millionaires are not looking for wives in places of such a reputation as this—and as for her marrying a man in ordinary circumstances, she never shall, if I can prevent it, for when he had owned her for awhile he would neglect and abuse her and spend his money on other women, and if he had any bad luck financially, he would vent all his spite and ill-nature on her, and the chances would be she would be compelled to work like a slave in the bargain. Oh, I know what marriage is, and I tell you it is the biggest fraud which was ever perpetrated upon suffering humanity."

Will Evers leaned back in his chair and laughed long and loud. "Why, Fan," he cried merrily, "you don't see but one side of the matrimonial question, that's sure. Why, in this country a woman has every advantage over a man. The law gives her almost everything. If a man marries he is obliged to support his wife or go to jail. If he runs away she can have him arrested and brought back, and if he strikes her or even uses vile and

profane language, she can have him arrested for that. I think it is the man who should look before he leaps into marriage. Yours is the winning side in that game, sure."

"Oh, I know there is truth in what you say," said Fanchette, "but still the advantage of having the power of the law on the wife's side does not prevent him from behaving in the most detestable manner to her."

"Why, Fan," he cried, "I know of lots of men today who hate the sight of their wives, but they are obliged to abide by their bargain and support them just the same."

Fanchette laughed. "There. You are defeated in the argument by your own statement. You say you know lots of men who hate their own wives. That is just what I claimed. Men do hate and detest their own wives, after they have owned them long enough to tire of them, and they grudgingly hand out the money for their support because they are compelled to by law, when if they could do as they desire, they would spend that money with pleasure and without a protest on a new favorite who did not belong to them. I tell you I know of instances where a man having a sweet, pretty, refined wife in his home, prefers to spend his time and lavish his caresses and money on a woman who has no legal claim upon him. And he does not tire of her so quickly because he knows she is not legally his, and he does not feel so sure of her. He always has the fear that some other man will win her away from him. But the

chief charm lies in the fact that he has no right to her. I have taught Eva that of all the pitfalls to be avoided in this world, marriage is the most dangerous."

"But what are you going to do with this girl? You say she is perfectly innocent and knows nothing of lovers. And you say she shall not marry. Do you mean to keep her shut up somewhere to keep her away from men?"

"Oh, no. I expect she will accept the attention and money of some man, sometime, when one comes along who has lots of money to spend on her. She will learn what that kind of life is sometime, but not married life, if I can prevent it. If some man whom she will accept will keep her in comfort and luxury I shall be glad to have her meet that one, but she is young yet, and there is time enough."

A sudden light leaped into the man's eyes. "Oh I see!" he exclaimed. "You propose to have her live a life of freedom and unrestraint. To follow in your footsteps."

"I propose to have her get all the enjoyment out of life which she can and make the most of her opportunities without fettering herself in a hateful bond, from which she cannot free herself instantly if she should so desire. Freedom is everything in life."

"Well, Fan, I don't blame you for looking at it as you do. You had a pretty hard time of it with your three lawful husbands. But I am glad to find you again, and renew the old friendship.

"Will you and Eva go with me to the theater tomorrow night?"

"We will, with pleasure, and thank you too."

"Very well, then, I will come for you at the proper time. And Fan,"—"Yes?" she said inquiringly, "here is a little present for the sake of old times." He laid a gold piece in her hand, and she thanked him warmly, as he bade her good night and bowed himself out.

CHAPTER IX

He came for them the next night, bringing with him a large bunch of meteor roses, and felt well repaid by Eva's cry of delight, when he presented the rich, red blossoms. She took them in her hands and held them lovingly to her sweet face, while he watched her with glowing eyes. Then bringing a vase and filling it with water, she placed them carefully in it, and set them on an elegant little stand.

"Don't you want to carry them with you to-night?" he said.

"And have them droop their lovely heads in the heat at the theater? No indeed," she replied. "They are too beautiful to be allowed to die sooner than need be. Here we can enjoy them for two or three days. Can't we, Fanchette?"

"Just as you like, my pet," answered Fanchette, with an indulgent smile. She was feeling very well satisfied with the behavior of this man, whom she had known in other years, and who had come back to renew old ties of friendship, with a bank book with five thousand dollars to his credit inside. She felt disposed to smile on him, and she had dressed herself and Eva in the very best their

wardrobes could furnish, to do him honor tonight. Fanchette looked quite handsome in a gown of black lace, and Eva was like a vision in a soft, white mull with blue ribbons.

That he appreciated every detail of their toilettes could be seen by the expression in his eyes, and Fanchette knew they had made a favorable impression, even before he whispered as he put them in the carriage: "You are making me proud and happy tonight, you both look so lovely."

All the evening his eyes followed Eva's every look and action, and when he bade them good night at their own door, after a dainty little supper following the theater, he asked if he might call the next night, and received from Fanchette a smiling assent. As they were preparing to retire, she said to Eva, "How do you like Mr. Evers?" and Eva replied that she thought him very kind and polite, and that she had enjoyed the evening very much.

"I am glad you like him," said Fanchette, "for he is an old and valued friend of mine, and he can make it very pleasant for us, Eva, for he has lots of money and he may as well spend it on us as on someone else, see?"

"I see," said Eva, laughing. "Oh, Fanchette, all you care for men is their money and what they will give you."

Fanchette's face grew hard and stern. "That is all there is to care for," she said. "Always manage to get all you can from them, my dear, for remember, all they care for us women is to amuse

themselves with us, to gratify their own selfishness.

"While a woman is young and attractive, they enjoy her beauty, but when that beauty is gone, and she becomes old and faded and wrinkled, they turn from her with a shudder of disgust, and she might then starve in a garret for all they would care."

Eva took her kitten in her arms and crept into bed. "I'm sure you must know all about it, Fanchette," she said, "for you have seen a great deal of life; as for me I am sure I shall never care for any of them; though I like Dick, dear old Dick, but then, he's only a boy."

The next evening Mr. Evers called again, and when Fanchette would have sent Eva to stay awhile with Dick he surprised her by asking that she be allowed to remain. "For I can stay but a short time, tonight," he said, "and I want to see you both." He took a box of Huyler's candies from his coat pocket and presented it, and they set the box on the little stand where his roses still stood, and thanked him for his kind thoughtfulness.

No one would have thought Fanchette a man-hater that night, as she exerted herself to be agreeable to this man, with whom she chatted and laughed, and to whom she paid subtle, half-veiled compliments, which were very pleasing to him. Eva said little; speaking only when spoken to, and sitting, most of the time on a low hassock, fondling and playing with her kitten. She would

have much preferred to be in Dick's rooms, she thought, but she would not be impolite to this man who had given them so much pleasure, and who had expressed a wish for her to stay. She glanced up occasionally, to find his eyes fixed upon her with a look of intense admiration, but she neither blushed nor smiled. "What was his admiration to her?" and then, "perhaps it was only his natural way of looking at people. Perhaps it was his way of trying to look pleasant." At last he addressed a remark directly to her.

"Your kitten is a very fortunate animal, Miss Eva," he said. "I think I should like to be in his shoes for a while. I am sure I should enjoy it."

"Would you like to chase a spool and play with a string?" she said, smiling, "if you would we can have a frolic, and you may play you are a kitten. I'm sure I should get lots of amusement out of it."

"I wasn't thinking of that," he replied. "It occurred to me that if I could only be a kitten you might put your arms around me, and hold me to your heart once in a while as you do him."

He expected she would blush and look conscious and confused, but she did nothing of the kind. She was conscious of a faint feeling of repulsion; that was all. She raised her head with a slight hauteur, and her violet eyes looked coolly into his shifting ones. "I suppose you know that little word 'if' has stood for more failures in this world than any other word of its size in the English language," was all she said.

He understood that he had made a mistake somehow, and turned his conversation to incidents which he had witnessed in his travels, and he became so entertaining that Eva began to listen with interest to his description of places and people. He took his departure in good season, and said he should do himself the honor to call again soon.

Three evenings later he called, and from his manner Fanchette felt that there was something on his mind which he hardly knew how to put into words. There was an uneasy shift to his eyes when they met hers, and a restraint of manner which indicated an unsettled state of mind. She sent Eva into Dick's apartments, greatly to that young lady's relief, and then turning to the man, she said, looking him straight in the eyes: "There is something on your mind, Will, what is it? Tell me."

"Oh, it is nothing very much," he replied.

"Tell me what it is," she repeated. "You may as well out with it, for I will know," placing her hands on his shoulders and looking at him searchingly.

"I want Eva," he blurted out as though compelled by the power of her gaze. "Oh, forgive me, Fan, I should not have said that but you forced me to answer."

He expected she would feel hurt and resentful, and he thought he would not blame her if she should, for it could not be pleasant for her to have a man whom she had known for years and been fond of, and with whom she had lived a life of abandon-

ment, transfer his affections to a younger and fairer favorite. He felt sorry for her, and hoped she would not take the news too much to heart, for he had set his mind most determinedly to the task of winning Eva, and it was very embarrassing to have to tell this woman, whom he had loved in the past, that he desired her younger and fairer companion to take her place in his affections. He hoped Fan would not cry or go into hysterics. That would make him feel very uncomfortable, and he was uncomfortable enough now. He expected bitter reproaches, and perhaps a tirade of abuse. What then was his amazement when Fanchette laughed a little scornfully, and said coolly:

"How much will you give her if she will consent to live with you? What do you propose to offer to make it an object to her? Have you ever considered that she may refuse absolutely, and that no amount you may offer will induce her to accept you? You have never hinted any such thing to her, yet; how do you know you will not fail? If she wants you, I'm sure I am willing, provided you do the handsome thing by her. I would as soon give her to you as to any man I know, if she will consent."

It was now his turn to feel piqued. He was conscious of a feeling of resentment and injury. That this woman could give him up so coolly, could even laugh about it, angered him. His self-esteem had received a stunning blow. He looked down at the smiling face of the woman before him, and felt almost like striking her. How could she take his

unfaithfulness so calmly? It couldn't be that she cared a straw for him. Now was his chance to make her wince. He drew away with an injured air and said sadly, "I only did this to test you, Fan, and see if you cared for me; but I see you don't, or you would not give me up so willingly. I had no thought of winning Eva, I just said so to see what you would do, but now that I know you don't care for me, I will try to win her. There is no use of my wasting any more love on you, when you can turn me over to another woman and laugh about it."

Fanchette laughed again, and going up to him, gave him a pat on the cheek. "Now, Will," she said, "don't do any heroics on my account. Do you think I'm a fool? Do you think I am blind? You have followed Eva with your eyes ever since you came, and eyes can express a great deal. I knew you were fascinated with her, and I have been expecting you would ask for her. Don't try to lie out of it, for you can't deceive me at all. You are perfectly enraptured with Eva, and I have seen it from the first. Don't blame me for my indifference, Will, for I have lived this kind of life so long, I am tired to death of everything and everybody. All I live for is Eva. She is the only living creature on this earth that I love. We might as well understand each other first as last."

"All right, Fan," he said. "I didn't want to hurt your feelings, but you hurt me when you gave me up so willingly. But it's all right. If you will speak a good word for me to Eva, I will do the

generous thing by her. As long as my money lasts we will live well and enjoy ourselves. Won't you try and influence her to like me?"

"I'll do the best I can for you, but I can't promise for her. She must choose for herself."

"She is so young and innocent and sweet, I will marry her, Fan, if she will have me. I will give her my name in lawful marriage."

"No you won't!" said Fanchette, "if I have the power to prevent it. If Eva wants to live with you, and help you spend you money, she may; but when it comes to marrying you, taking you for better or worse, richer or poorer, to love, honor, and obey, she never shall. Eva shall never be the legal slave of any man. When she gets tired of her bargain she can leave you, and be free to go where she pleases. Marry you! Never!"

"Oh, very well," he said testily, "it shall be as you like. I only thought I was paying a compliment to her by offering to marry her, but the other arrangement will suit me perfectly."

He came again the next night, bringing another bunch of hot-house flowers, and watched with satisfaction, Eva's delight in the beautiful blossoms. When he saw how carefully she preserved them, and with what regret she saw them fade, he flattered himself at first that perhaps she cherished them on his account, and he began to look the admiration he felt, and show his preference for her in a thousand little ways, expecting she would show some sign that she reciprocated it; but Eva's manner toward him was entirely free from co-

quettery. She neither blushed or smiled when she encountered his ardent glances, and he began to perceive that she was still an innocent, unawakened child.

As he saw her day after day, his desire to possess her became an all-absorbing passion. When he saw that she was indifferent to him in her childish innocence, the wish that he might be the one to teach her the power of love—as he interpreted it—grew stronger with every hour of his acquaintance with her. Fanchette gave him all the encouragement she could by throwing Eva into his company as much as possible, and she praised him to her when he had gone. But Eva remained calm and indifferent to all this, treating him in a frank and unaffected manner, which attracted him as nothing else would have done.

One day he came as usual, just after sunset, and Eva noticed that he carried something in his closed hand. He laughingly told her to hold her hand and shut her eyes. She held out her hand but did not close her eyes as he had requested, and he placed in her palm a little live sparrow which began to struggle for freedom.

"On my way here I passed by a place where there was a fire, and some sparrows had been overcome by the smoke, just enough to disable them for flying, and were fluttering on the ground, so I picked up one and brought it along for you to give to your kitten."

Eva's hands closed gently about the struggling little bird, and going quickly to the open window

she set the little captive free. As he flew away with a chirp of relief, she turned toward the man and there was a light in her blue eyes which he did not like to see. "Why didn't you give it to your kitten? He would have had a great time with it," he said, feeling rather uncomfortable.

"If I had a pet tiger do you think I would feed him on live babies?" she asked, and turning abruptly she left the room. Going into the apartment where Fanchette sat sewing, she said: "If you want that man to be entertained you will have to entertain him yourself, for I will not."

Fanchette looked up wonderingly at the tone of her voice. "Why, what is the trouble now?" she asked.

"Nothing, except that I don't like him," said Eva. "He brought in a little live bird for the kitten to play with. I shall never like him any more. He is heartless and cruel." She passed on through the room and going out into the corridor made her way to Dick's apartments.

Fanchette laid down her sewing and went into the room where Eva had left their guest. He looked at her uneasily. "You have made a bad blunder," she said. "You might have known better than to have done this. If you had risked your life to save some bird or dog or cat, you would have made a great impression on Eva; but now it will be up-hill work for you to regain her confidence. I am sorry you made such a mistake."

"Can't you intercede for me, Fan? I tell you I must have that girl. If you will do all that you

can to help me, I will give you five hundred dollars the day she is mine."

"I'll do what I can," she replied, "for I need money as badly as anybody; but if you go on blundering in this fashion, you will certainly lose the game in spite of all I can do."

"I'll be more careful," he said. "I never thought. I knew she loved her kitten, and I thought that whatever pleased him would please her."

"That is where you made your mistake," said Fanchette. "Eva loves her kitten, it is true, but she is not even willing that he should catch a mouse. I believe she would go out of her way to keep him from treading on a worm. You don't know what a tender little heart she has for all creatures. There is nothing which arouses her indignation so much as to see the strong tyrannize over the weak."

"I'll remember that, and not offend again," he said.

In the meantime, in Dick's room, Eva and Dick were deep in the mysteries of a book of ghost stories, and the episode of the bird and kitten were for the time forgotten.

"Oh! how I would like to see a haunted house," said Eva. "How I wish we could find one somewhere and go and spend a night in it. Wouldn't that be fine?"

"I saw a haunted house once," replied Dick, "but you wouldn't catch anybody that lived near there going there nights."

"Oh! where was it? Tell me about it!" demanded Eva, excitedly.

"It was five years ago," said Dick. "It was before I came to live in this house. I was one of a lot of fresh air kids that were sent out into the country one summer, and the little village where I went was called Greendell, and out on one side of the village was an old haunted house. I know, 'cause I saw it myself."

"Did you go into it?" she asked breathlessly.

"In the daytime we did. Some of the boys that lived in Greendell went with me, but they were afraid, even in the daytime, and you couldn't have hired 'em to go there at night for they knew so many that had been scared half to death that they wouldn't risk it."

"How I would like to see it," sighed Eva.

"It is a long way from here," said Dick. "We took a train and traveled two hours, and then there was a big wagon waiting at the station where we got off the train, and we got in and that carried us ten miles into the country before we came to the village they called Greendell. But oh, the country was so fine and the people there were awful good to us."

"Eva!" called a familiar voice, and Eva ran to the door. "Come, dear," called Fanchette. "Mr. Evers has gone."

As they prepared to retire, Fanchette said: "I am sorry you are so offended with Mr. Evers. He felt very much cut up about it. I wish you would try and accept his attentions, Eva, for he has plenty of money and can give you so much. And you know I told you that you could get a lover who

had money, because you are growing so beautiful. Now is your chance, Eva, to make hay while the sun shines. This man has five thousand dollars and is perfectly charmed with you. Just think how many pretty dresses and what lots of pleasure you could get from a lover who can afford to do the generous thing by you as he can."

"I don't like him," said Eva, "and I don't care if he has fifty thousand dollars. If you want me to have a lover you must let me have one that I can like. I don't want anything Mr. Evers can buy me. I would rather not have any new dresses than to take them from him, and I would not enjoy any places of amusement if I had to go with him. I would much prefer to stay at home."

"Won't you try to tolerate him just to please me, dearest?" said Fanchette. "I have had to do unpleasant things a great many times for you, that you might be comfortable. Just try to like him, my pet, and perhaps it will be easier than you think. He adores you. Won't you try?"

Eva threw her arms about Fanchette and kissed her lovingly. "Dear, dear Fanchette," she said, "I will try just to please you. How good you have always been to me. I will try to like him a little for your sake."

"I thought you would do that much if I asked you, my pet, for you were always such a sweet, obedient child. I am only advising you now for your good, for we are growing poorer every day, and your beauty will be all we will have to depend on soon. If I could provide for you as I

once could, I would not ask this of you, Eva, but my best days are over and I am on the shady side now, so far as beauty goes, but even at my best, I was never beautiful like you."

The next evening when Will Evers made his appearance Eva was watching from a window and saw him coming through the back yards from the next street. He leaped the fence which enclosed the little yard where Pat O'Leary raised a few tomatoes, and a dozen heads of cabbage, and running up the steps, knocked on the door. Eva admitted him, and something in her gentle, subdued manner, gave him courage. She had promised Fanchette that she would try to like him, and now she was trying to keep her dislike for him from showing in her manner. He took her hand, and looking very penitent said: "Have you forgiven me for my thoughtlessness? You don't know how sorry I am."

She drew her hand away gently and said: "I will try and forget it. I hope you are not intentionally cruel."

"I think you could make a saint of any man if you would use you influence with him," he cried. "You don't know how lovely you are, and what a power a beautiful girl has over a man who loves her as I love you."

He advanced again and seized her hand. She retreated a step or two and looked up at him with frightened eyes. But he was eager to make the most of his opportunity and he drew her suddenly to him, folded her in his arms and in spite of her

frantic struggles to release herself from his hated embrace, kissed her half a dozen times.

With all the strength of her young arms she pushed him from her, and taking her handkerchief, wiped the spots where his unwelcome kisses had left their impress. Then going to the window she flung the handkerchief out into the street, and turning to him with flashing eyes she said in a low, intense voice, "Don't you ever dare touch me again."

He was somewhat taken aback by her repulsion of him. He had thought, encouraged by her gentle manner, that the victory was about won, and now she was standing before him with the air of an offended queen, while her blue eyes seemed to flash fire. He did not know what to make of it, and while he stood hesitating what to do next, she turned suddenly, without another word, and went out.

Passing on through the other rooms of the suite and seeing nothing of Fanchette, she went out into the corridor and made her way to Dick's apartments. She found him busily engaged in getting his supper over the little stove. He looked up as she entered in response to his "come in," and the gay greeting died on his lips when he saw her flushed face and glowing eyes.

"Why, Eva," he said anxiously, "what is the matter? What has happened?"

Then her feelings gave way and she burst into a shower of tears. Dick left his supper to burn black, forgetting everything else in his distress at Eva's

tears, and as he tried to comfort her, he questioned her anxiously to learn the cause of her grief. She told him all about it and Dick's honest, brown eyes burned with indignation, and his hands involuntarily clenched as he listened.

"If I was a man I'd lick the beastly wretch within an inch of his life," he said when he had heard it all. "Did Fanchette know about it?"

"Fanchette was not there. She had gone out somewhere. I could not find her, and I wasn't going to stay in there with him another minute. Oh, Dick, I can't tell you how I felt when he kissed me. I never hated anyone so in my life before. Something rose up in my throat and I felt as though I could kill him right there."

"He ought to be killed," declared Dick. "It would serve him right, and Eva, if Fanchette don't put a stop to his coming there, you will have to come and stay here."

"Oh, I couldn't do that, Dick. You forget about your step-father. He wouldn't have me here, and I wouldn't want to be where he is. That would never do."

"That's so," replied Dick. "I never thought of him. But what will you do if Fanchette does not forbid him to come to the house? You can't be tormented like this."

Eva went to the window and stood looking out, while Dick returned to his scorched and blackened supper. There was silence for a few minutes, broken only by the rattle of the cooking utensils and the snoring of the old dog, Tipsy, who lay on his bed behind the stove.

At last Eva spoke. "I'll tell you what we'll do, Dick. You'll help me, I know. If he comes again tomorrow evening, we will go down and unfasten Pat O'Leary's bull dog, and when he goes through there he'll get his just deserts. He won't be able to come again very soon if that dog gets a good hold of him."

Dick laughed. "I guess that's no joke," he said. "But how are we going to unfasten him and get away before he gets hold of us? He's an ugly brute to manage."

"I thought of that. We will have to get a thick stick and brace it up against the door of the kennel. Then we will have a cord attached to the stick. We can unfasten the chain that holds the kennel door, after we get the stick put up to hold it, and after we get back over the fence we can pull the cord and jerk the stick away and that will leave the door so that the dog can push it right open. The brute will just rave when he hears us about his kennel, and the minute he can push the door open he will come out like a roaring lion, and as soon as he has the range of the yard I wouldn't give much to be in Mr. Evers' shoes when he attempts to cross it."

"He'll be minus some of his clothes, and perhaps a chunk or two of flesh," said Dick, smiling. Then growing serious he said: "The dog might kill him, did you think of that?"

"Oh, the dog won't kill him, but he'll bite him, probably; but that is his lookout. If he would keep away from here he wouldn't get hurt. If he

will persist in coming, he must take the consequences. I want the dog to scare him so he'll keep away."

"All right," said Dick," we'll do as you propose and see if that will keep him away. But if that fails, what will you do?"

"Oh! I don't know," she cried. "What shall I do, Dick?"

"Well, if everything else fails, you will have to leave home, and see if that will bring Fanchette to her senses. I blame her for allowing him to come there when she knows you don't want him. Why don't she shut him out?"

"She is dazzled by his money," said Eva "She wants me to accept him as a lover because he has five thousand dollars. She means well. She thinks his money can do us so much good. But I tell you, Dick, I wouldn't have him if he was worth a million. I hate him and I will never let him touch my hand again."

"Good for you, Eva! I'll stand by you, and do everything I can to help you get rid of him. Maybe it would be a good thing if Pat O'Leary's bull-dog would eat him up."

CHAPTER X.

Jessamine Erlwin had returned to her palatial city home, but she was not destined to forget her experience in Greendell, for in about a week after her arrival, Ernest Grayland called and sent up his card. Fortunately for Jessamine, her father was not at home, and her aunt had gone to her own room with a severe headache, and orders not to be disturbed, so Jessamine went down to the drawing-room alone, and greeted her caller with an air which put him at his ease at once.

"You are looking well, Miss Erlwin," he said, as she gave him her hand. "I think it must agree with you to sojourn in the country." He glanced about to see if anyone else was within hearing, and she, divining his thoughts, said with a smile, "You may say what you please. There is no one to hear us. I am fortunate today, for papa is out and auntie is in her room, so there is no one to ask me where I made your acquaintance, Mr. Grayland."

"Oh, but our acquaintance is not to end here, I hope," he said. "We must be prepared for that question, so that when they do ask it, you can tell them something entirely satisfactory. Suppose

you tell them that your friend in Greendell made you acquainted with me when I was on a business trip through that region. That would not be an untruth, for if your friend, Miss Lexington, had not gone with you to the haunted house we should not have met when we did, for you would not have ventured there alone. So she did, indirectly, make us acquainted, see?"

"I see," said Jessamine, "and that will be a very ingenious way to explain it to their satisfaction. Papa will be very pleased to make your acquaintance, I am sure, for I have often heard him speak of your father in glowing terms. So I know he will be pleased to meet his son."

"Thank you," he said earnestly. "I shall be more than pleased to meet him also. And now, before anyone comes in, I want to return your loan, with many thanks." He placed in her hand the amount she had loaned him and she dropped the money in a little box on the mantel.

"Now, Miss Erlwin, I have a strange story to tell you, if you will allow me to trespass upon your time. Were you going out or expecting guests this afternoon? If you were, the story can wait. But I am anxious to have you hear it soon."

"No, I had nothing on hand for this afternoon. You could not have chosen a more favorable time. And now you have aroused my curiosity, I am anxious to hear the story."

"It is a story that will make the haunted house of greater interest to us all," he said, and he related to Jessamine the confession of the man at

the Gypsy camp. He told her how he had received a note requesting him to come out there and come alone, and gave her every word, as nearly as he could remember, of the dying man's deposition.

Jessamine listened with the greatest interest expressed in her glowing eyes, and never once interrupted him during his narration of all the events connected with the murder of his aunt, his uncle's death, and the abduction of the child, Evangeline. But her eyes spoke volumes, and when he had finished she said:

"I had heard the story as it was told in the village, but no one there ever supposed for an instant that the child was not dead. And just to think that it was your own cousin, and that for all you know to the contrary, she is living somewhere in the world today. Are you going to try to find her?"

"I shall turn my whole attention to it, "he replied, "but I do not want to make it public, for I do not want to be bothered with impostors who are always ready to come up and claim anything they think there is any money in, and Evangeline will have a fortune of a million at least, in her own right, and perhaps more. My father would know how much, so you see, Miss Erlwin, why I do not care to make it public until after she is found, and then she will take her proper place in the world. I only hope she has fallen into good hands. My greatest fear is that she has been reared in ignorance and vice. But she would now be about fifteen years and a few months of age,

so if she has not been too badly spoiled, there will be a chance of remedying the damage to some extent. And if she has fallen into good hands and been well trained, what a satisfaction it will be. But whether in good or evil surroundings, she must be found."

"Be of good cheer," said Jessamine. "If you believed as thoroughly in heredity as I do you would not be so alarmed about her. I am a firm believer in the old adage, 'blood will tell.' She comes of a fine family, and she will inherit the general characteristics of her race. Therefore, she will not fall as readily into evil ways; that is, she will not become low or vile, because her nature will revolt against those things. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly," he replied, "and you have encouraged me. I had not thought of that, I confess, but there is much in what you say. I believe in inherited traits, myself, but it had not occurred to me in this case. I was thinking only of the training she might receive. I thank you for calling my attention to a fact which no one can deny, and which casts a more cheerful light on the matter."

"And now there is another thing which perhaps you do not know in regard to this," said Jessamine. "They told me that the nurse who took care of baby Evangeline, still lives in the house near the western gate, within the grounds of the haunted house. That your father gave them permission to live there and work some of the land for their maintenance. The people in Greendell think her a little unbalanced mentally, because she

has declared for years that her mistress, Evangeline's mother, appears to her in her dreams and tells her that the child is living and will come home some day. Isn't that strange?"

"Well, that is worth knowing," he exclaimed. "The man never mentioned that. Perhaps he did not know it. Yes, it is unaccountably strange. I must see this woman right away. Perhaps she can give me some clue by which I will be able to identify my cousin when I do find her."

"And did your father never tell you anything about this family tragedy? Did he never mention it that you can remember?"

"Never. I had never heard a whisper of it before the day I went to the Gypsy camp. But then, my father is a peculiar man. He is entirely taken up with studies of old Egyptian tombs and monuments, and I was only eight years old when this thing occurred, so that is the reason I never knew of it. Since I left college I have traveled nearly all the time, and you can see why it never reached my ears. When I tell my father that the child whom he supposed was strangled, and buried in a nameless grave in the woods, is alive, and her fate unknown, he will tell me to leave no means untried to find her. He will be as anxious to have her restored to her rightful place as though she was his own. And now I must go. I have made my call unpardonably long, especially for the first. I hope you will forgive me and grant me the privilege of making another, soon."

"Oh, I am so interested in all this," said Jessa-

mine, raising her bright, brown eyes, and just now they were glowing with the intensity of her feelings, making his pulses leap. "I am so glad you told me all about it, and you will let me know from time to time what success you are having, will you not? I shall be anxious to hear, and if there is anything I can do to help you, you will let me do it, won't you? I believe you said that the woman's name was Fanny Dumond?"

"That was the name she was known by at the time little Evangeline was left in her care," he said. "Indeed I will let you help me if you can, and I thank you sincerely, Miss Erlwin, for all your sympathy and encouragement. I will let you know how the case progresses, as the detectives say. You will hear from me often." He bowed himself out and, going straight home, ordered his horse, ate a hurried lunch, and was soon on his way to Greendell.

It was bedtime for the good people of the little village by the time he reached the place, so he went directly to the little inn and put up for the night. After breakfast the next morning, he started out on foot to pay a visit to the woman who had been Evangeline's nurse. He was the target for many curious eyes as he strolled through the village streets, and many were the comments on his aristocratic appearance, and conjectures as to what brought him there, but no one was any the wiser, for he asked no questions of anyone, preferring to find the house to which he was going by the description Jessamine had given him, than to

gratify any of the rustic curiosity by inquiring the way. So he walked leisurely to the entrance to the grounds surrounding the haunted house, and then, turning in a westerly direction, he followed the iron fence which encircled them until he came to a gate and a small house, almost hidden by trees, and going up to the house door, rapped lightly. There was the sound of hurried footsteps inside, then the door was opened by a little woman who looked at him inquiringly without speaking a word.

He had not thought until that instant that he had never learned the woman's name. In his preoccupation of mind he had neglected that, and now he was momentarily at a loss what to say; but there was no help for it, he must say something, so he raised his hat politely and asked if she could tell him whether the woman who had been nurse to Evangeline Grayland lived there. He was not prepared for the effect of his words upon the woman. She gasped, turned deathly pale, and swayed so that he feared she was going to faint. At length she pressed her hand to her heart as though to quiet its wild beating, and gasped out.

"Oh! It has come at last! I knew it would! The great day I have waited for so long. Come in, kind sir, and pardon my agitation. I have looked for this hour so long, that now it has come, I am faint with joy."

She led the way into a cozy little sitting-room, placed a chair for him, and dropping weakly into another, sat opposite him. She still held her hand to her heart, but, though she was still ghastly pale,

she breathed more freely, and he could see that she was quieting herself by a powerful effort of will.

"I am sorry I startled you so," he said gently. "I never thought of its affecting you so. I was told that the woman who was nurse to the little Evangeline Grayland lived in a house by the western gate, so I thought this must be the house, but I was not sure, and I did not know the name, so I called to inquire.

"Yes, yes," said the woman impatiently. "I am the nurse, and this is the house. Tell me quickly what news you have of my lost baby. I can't endure this suspense."

"Then you think her lost, not dead, as other people do?" he asked. He was beginning to feel somewhat agitated himself, as he watched this woman's intense excitement.

She leaned toward him and laid her trembling hand on the arm of his chair. "I know she is not dead," she said, in a low intense tone. "I have known it for years. Every year since that awful night, on its anniversary, my mistress has appeared to me in my dreams, and said to me clearly and distinctly, 'Eva is living and will return to you.' I could hear the words just as plainly as I ever heard anything in my life, and do you think she would come back from the grave to lie to me or deceive me when I loved her and little Eva so well? But that is not all. Last night she came again, so bright and radiant, like sunshine in her white robes, and looking at me with shining blue eyes she said clearly and distinctly as ever, 'Eva is in

trouble and is coming home to you.' Three times she repeated those words, then with a heavenly smile she was gone. So then I knew by the change in her words that Eva was coming soon, and when you asked for the nurse who cared for Evangeline Grayland I knew that my dream had come true at last. Now tell me all about it, please, sir, as soon as you can, for I am wild to see the blessed baby again after all these years." She burst into a flood of tears, and bowing her head on her hands, sobbed convulsively.

Ernest felt his own eyes growing moist at the sight of her grief, and he hastened to tell her all he knew about the matter. She ceased sobbing and raising her head listened eagerly to every word he uttered, and when he had finished his story he said: "So you see, my good woman, your dreams have in part come true, but we have still to find our little Eva. Living she is, no doubt; but she has yet to come home. We will hope for the best, however, and I will do everything in my power to find her."

"Oh, bless you, sir, I know you will. You are a Grayland, and the Graylands are a grand family. Don't I know? Didn't your good father give Joe and I the use of this place and never asked us a cent for it all these years? Oh, how I would like to see the great house restored to its former grandeur, and see my lost darling, my little Eva, mistress there. It would be the happiest day of my life, and I know it will come. I can feel it."

"I hope it may," he replied fervently, as he arose

to take his departure. She laid a detaining hand on his arm and looked up at him wistfully. "Wouldn't you like to go over the great house and about the grounds? I should like so much to show you the place," she said. "It is fourteen years since I have had a sight of one of the Grayland family, and you don't know what your coming has been to me. I hate to let you go. Please, sir, won't you go over the place with me?"

"Why, of course I will, if you wish it," he replied heartily. Her devotion to his family touched him deeply, and although he did not care particularly about going all over the place again so soon, he would not refuse her, for he could see that she had her heart set upon it.

She ran to get a broad-brimmed hat, for the sun was hot, and then together they made their way through the weed-choked grounds, while she pointed out this place and that where a statue or arbor had stood, and at last they reached the great house itself and ascended the stone steps to the massive front doors. Taking a key from her neck she unlocked them and swung them open, and they entered the great hall, down the grand staircase of which he could see again in memory the white-robed, rose-crowned figure of Jessamine Erlwin coming slowly, while the blood-red light from Tom's red-fire lighted up the scene, and the events of that night passed before him again, clearly and distinctly as though they had occurred the night before.

He was so absorbed in his reverie that he did

not hear what his companion was saying until she stopped before the great fire-place and called his attention to the portrait which hung above it. "That," she said, "was my beautiful mistress, and I am sure that Eva will be like her, for she had the same features, the same hair and eyes, and the same proud, sweet smile. You might be able to recognize her by the remembrance of this picture if you impress it on your mind."

"There was no birthmark or blemish by which she could be positively identified?" he asked.

"None," replied the nurse, thoughtfully. "Her little body was absolutely perfect. Now we will go upstairs and I will show you the room where she lay in her little crib the night she was stolen."

They ascended the stairs, and she led the way to the room he had examined on that other night so short a time ago, but he did not disclose the fact that he had ever seen it before. She showed him the window where her mistress stood on the night of her death, and called his attention to the little lace-draped crib, and as they turned to go he pointed to the writing over the door. "'This is the ghost room!' What does that mean?" he asked. "Why is this place reported to be haunted? Have you ever seen anything uncanny here that should give it such a name?"

She looked at him with a peculiar expression, one that he could not define, as she replied: "They do say in the village that my mistress appears in the window, and is seen sometimes walking in the grounds. But I have never seen her excepting in

my dreams. But it is a good thing, perhaps, that they think so, for they will keep away from here and let things alone much better than they would if it was not for that. When they say anything to me about it, I tell them I should think it would be haunted if ever a place was, after such an awful murder; the destruction of a whole family. That it has reason to be haunted."

"Then you have never seen or heard anything strange here?"

He tried to ask the question carelessly, but he was thinking of the sounds they had heard that night so short a time ago. The shot, followed by the cry, the falling body, the hurrying footsteps, the flash of lightning and peal of thunder which had startled them all, and rendered Cecil nearly senseless with fright.

"No," she replied, "I have never seen or heard anything here which I did not think came from natural causes." But there was a faint glimmer of a smile on her face, and a queer expression in her eyes as she spoke, which did not escape his notice, for he was watching her closely, though not seeming to do so.

"I am glad of that," he said, "for if Eva should ever be found and want to come back here to live it would not be pleasant to be annoyed by strange happenings."

"When Eva comes back to the old home she will never be annoyed or frightened by anything supernatural. I will vouch for that," said the woman, earnestly, and he concluded that she knew

more about the ghost than she cared to confess.

"Now we will go into the other wing; the one on the other side," she said, and she led the way along the corridors, opening a door here and there and showing him glimpses of rooms from which nearly everything of value in the way of furnishings had been removed. She paused at last before a large, heavy door which looked strong enough to resist any ordinary attack upon it, and proceeded to unlock it and swing it open. He entered and found himself in a large store-room. Piles of carpets, rugs and hangings, heavy and light draperies, silken upholstered and inlaid furniture was there. Treasures in wood and tapestry and an overwhelming odor of camphor filled the room. The inside shutters of the windows were closed, and inside them was a network of iron bars. She turned to him, and waving her hand toward the heap of costly things, she said triumphantly:

"I have preserved all I could of the old treasures from moths as well as thieves. I have attended these things all these years to keep them for Eva.

"From the first time her mother appeared to me in my dreams and told me that Eva was living and would return to me, I went to work to save these things. I suppose some of them are damaged, but there are many of them as good as they were the day I put them here. When your father came here after the tragedy, being the only heir to all this, he turned his attention to seeing that the bodies had been properly placed in the family vault, searched the woods with a party of men to see if

they could find the little grave where that fiend of a Gypsy woman had buried the baby, as everyone supposed, and when he had done all he could in that line he took the horses away with him, all but one pair, came to me and said: 'You may have the little lodge at the west gate to live in, and work as much ground on the place as you wish. I have left you one pair of horses to use, and you may stay right on the place until you hear from me again.' He went away and left the house just as it was, furniture, silver, china, and all the beautiful statuary he never seemed to notice, and I supposed he would be back again in just a few days, or write, or send some one to look after it, but he went back across the ocean, and I have not seen or heard a word from him since. Now I will show you the statues."

She carefully locked the great door of the storeroom, and leading the way, passed on through the portion of the house which had been the servant's quarters, and came out at the door which Tom, Cecil and Jessamine had entered on that never-to-be-forgotten night. She pointed out the ruined fishpond, and called his attention to the place where the great stables had stood before they were destroyed by fire.

"I expect tramps did it," she said, "or else it was the village boys."

"Were your horses or any animals in there when the fire occurred?" he asked.

"No," she replied, "we had built a small barn nearer our house, where our farm animals were.

The great barn was not burned until five years after all this happened."

She led the way back to her small cottage, and entering by a side door, passed through and unlocked the door of what seemed to be another storeroom. It was built on to the main part of the house like a lean-to. A window high up in the wall gave but a dim light, but he started back in astonishment at the treasures of art here revealed. Beautiful forms, dainty and fairylike, gleamed in that dim light. Here were statues of great value. Nymphs and fauns, Greek gods and goddesses, Cupid and Psyche, Venus, Diana, Niobe, and a score of others, done in finest Carrara marble, together with carved stone figures of a pair of lions and a group of three deer. There were beautiful vases in marble and bronze, small statuettes, dainty bric-a-brac, and curios. Dainty forms in all their matchless beauty greeted his eyes on every side, and he was so taken aback by the sight of these wonderful creations of art in such a place as this, that he gave vent to his astonishment, greatly to her delight.

"I had this built on here on purpose to put these in," she said, "to save them from the ignorant cattle who inhabit the village here. They would have broken and destroyed them if they had been left where they could have got at them."

"Of course, you couldn't expect cattle to know any better than to run over and into such things," he said, with pretended innocence. "You showed great good sense to take them inside where they would be protected."

"I don't mean horses and cows," she said smiling, "I mean that the villagers are ignorant cattle, and would not know the value of one finger of one of these treasures. I knew they were the most valuable of anything on the place, and I don't really know what they are worth, myself. I only realized that they were almost beyond price and I was surprised that your father did not leave any directions about them or do anything with them, for he knew what they were and what they must have cost."

Ernest smiled. "They were not old enough to interest my father," he said. "If they had been two or three thousand years old and covered with hieroglyphics or picture writing, he would have wrapped each one in a silk blanket and carried them away in his arms if he could. My father cares nothing for money excepting as it enables him to prosecute his studies and research. He is buried alive in the old, musty tombs and catacombs of Egypt, and he has forgotten, very probably, all about this place, and what he said to you. He never had mentioned this matter to me. I never knew anything about the tragedy until the man at the Gypsy camp made his confession."

"How strange," she said. "But that accounts for much in his manner which I could not understand. He was very kind and gentle in his ways, but he never seemed to notice things that I thought he would be the most interested in. You know that most people are looking at the value of an article and figuring on what it would sell for; but your

father did not seem to think of those things at all. He was a fine appearing gentleman and so kind, and he seemed so greatly distressed over the death of his brother and sister-in-law, and the fate of the little angel, Eva. Now I will show you the silver, and then I think that is about all there is that will interest you."

She went to one corner and opening the great chests showed him an immense amount of silver plate, solid silver and a quantity of valuable china. "I only brought the choicest pieces in here," she said. "There is much that is not quite so fine in the strong room with the furniture, but I felt safer to have these here where I could be near them. We moved all this in the night, Joe and I, so that the village people would not see us."

Ernest Grayland looked admiringly at the little woman before him. "How faithful and honest you have been," he said. "You have proved yourself worthy of any trust, no matter how great. You shall have your reward for all this. Eva ought to love you devotedly, and reward you handsomely, and I think she will; but if she don't reward you, I will. In all my life I never came across a case of greater devotion and honesty and I have traveled almost all over the world."

She flushed red with pleasure at his words of commendation and made a little gesture of protest. "I only did as my heart dictated," she replied, tears springing to her eyes. "I loved my mistress and little Eva more than I can tell you. I was heartbroken over their sad fate. It will make me

happier than anything else could to get my little angel back again."

"How do you know but that I may be a robber or burglar come to deceive you and find out about all these treasures you have shown me? You never saw me until today," he said mischievously.

"Oh, I know you are a Grayland, for your face and manner would proclaim that fact to anyone who was not blind," she said laughing, "and any member of the Grayland family is perfectly true and good. And then I did see you once or twice when you were a very little chap, not more than four or five years old, I should think. You perhaps did not know that I had been in service in your uncle's family before he married. I used to come out here summers to help wait on the guests before he brought his wife here. Oh, I know the Grayland family features. No one could deceive me in that, and I believe I should know Eva wherever I happened to meet her after all these years. How I hope she has been tenderly cared for and properly reared."

"I'm sure I hope so too," he replied. "And now I will bid you good bye for the present. I will let you know as soon as I learn anything satisfactory. I shall begin by tracing the woman, Fanny Dumond, and following up the trail that way. You shall hear from me before long."

He went back to the inn, mounted Rocket and returned to the city by the way he had come. He called on Jessamine, and told her what he had learned in his interview with the nurse. She wished him all success in his search, and he promised to report at times the progress he made.

CHAPTER XI.

"I wish you would not ask me to ever speak to that Will Evers again, Fanchette," said Eva, "you can't understand how I hate him. Why do you allow him to come here when he makes himself so fresh?"

She had told Fanchette all her troubles. Told her how he had seized her in his arms and held her by main force while he kissed her in spite of her struggles to free herself. Fanchette listened and smiled indulgently, with a calmness that exasperated Eva, who was in dead earnest, and thought her companion ought to feel as seriously about the matter as she did.

"You will get over your dislike for him in time, dear," replied Fanchette, soothingly. "You are angry with him now, and he was a little too demonstrative. I think myself he went too far when he had not had much encouragement. Try and overlook it, my pet, and make up your quarrel with him, for we need all he can give us, and he is disposed to be generous. You might as well have him for a lover as anyone. You won't find one every day that has five thousand dollars to spend for your entertainment."

"Then you will not promise to forbid his coming here?" asked Eva, and there was a new tone to her voice which Fanchette had never heard before, and she looked at her in surprise. Eva's blue eyes were glowing with a light of determination and fixed resolve that should have given warning to the older woman not to drive her too far, but she could not imagine her gentle little Eva in the role of a desperate woman, and she did not take warning, but said decidedly, yet pleasantly: "Why, of course I can't refuse to let him come here. I want him to come as long as his money lasts, and you will be doing a much more sensible thing to accept his attentions to you, than to cast him off for some other woman to pick up. Smile on him, encourage him, accept his presents and spend his money like a sensible little girl. When his money is gone it will be time enough to quarrel with him."

Eva said no more, for she saw that Fanchette was not to be moved from the position she had taken, but her young heart was very heavy as she went to her rest that night, and she cried herself to sleep with her kitten clasped in her arms. The next day she was very quiet, and Fanchette congratulated herself that she had concluded to profit by her advice.

About dusk Eva went to Dick's rooms, and they watched by a window to see if the hated intruder would come as usual. Soon they saw the familiar figure coming across the back yards. He leaped the board fence that encircled O'Leary's little garden patch, and ran lightly up the steps to Fanchette's door.

"Now is our chance, Dick," said Eva. "Come on." They hurried down the back stairs, secured a thick stick, to which Dick had attached a long, strong cord, and went down the path to the little enclosure.

"We are in luck tonight," whispered Dick, "for Pat and his wife have gone away, and so they will not discover that the dog is loose till they come home. I saw them when they went. The kennel is on this side. You stay here while I climb over and unfasten the brute."

"Do be careful, Dick, and be sure to prop that stick solid against the door, so he can't get out before you get away."

"If the chain was fastened by a padlock we couldn't unfasten it," said Dick, "but it is only hooked into a staple on the outside of the kennel. I looked at it today, and saw how it was fixed. All I will have to do is to block the door with this stick till I can get the hook out of the staple, and when I get back over the fence, pull the stick away and the door will swing open, and the dog come out. One of us will have to watch, though, to see that no one else gets over in there, for that dog is the most bloodthirsty brute I ever saw. When Pat comes home he will discover that he is out and put him back again, so if your friend goes home before Pat O'Leary does, we will stand some show of winning the game."

He leaped the fence, and approached the kennel. As he placed the stick firmly in position against the door he was greeted by a savage growl from

the inside. He quickly unhooked the chain, and keeping in his hand the cord which was attached, he swiftly retreated to the fence and soon stood on the other side with Eva.

"Now," he said as he jerked the cord, and the stick flew back, and with a rush and a succession of savage growls the dog bounded out and glared about the enclosure wrathfully—"if Dick Delmorn was in there now his name would not be Delmorn, it would be mud."

They made their way back to the house, and Dick volunteered to watch and warn anyone who might venture into the dangerous region.

"I'll sit out here with you, Dick," said Eva. "I don't want to go into our part of the house while he is there. If Fanchette likes him so much she may entertain him. I will not."

They sat in silence for what seemed to them a long time. At last they heard Fanchette calling Eva, but they kept quiet and Eva did not answer. Fanchette went in again and for another half hour all was quiet, then they heard a door open; heard Fanchette say, "Good night, Will," and then he came swiftly down the path; leaped the fence; there was a savage growl, a rush, an oath, the sound of something tearing, more oaths, louder growls, the sound of a sharp struggle; then they saw by the dim light that came through from the other street, a form scrambling over the opposite fence, kicking wildly in a frantic effort to escape from something which seemed to be hanging to him. After a desperate struggle the form dis-

appeared on the other side, and in a couple of minutes more reappeared, limping slowly out to the other street. As he passed out of sight, beyond the corner of O'Leary's house, Dick said: "That dog chewed him like sixty, I'll bet. Now, aint you sorry for him, Eva?"

"Not very," she replied. "If he was able to walk home, it is more than he deserves. But I don't believe he will come tomorrow night, so I'll have a little rest. That bull-dog does his work as though he enjoys it," she added laughing.

"Our plan was a success," said Dick, "but I don't see how it is going to be permanent. When he recovers his equilibrium he will come back again; only I don't believe he will come through Pat O'Leary's garden. You had better go in now, Eva, and I will watch until Pat comes home, then if he doesn't discover that the dog is out, I'll tell him and he will not suspect us of having any hand in it."

She thanked him and went back to the house. Fanchette asked her where she had been. She replied that she had been out with Dick. Fanchette said no more for she knew that she had gone out to avoid meeting Will Evers. She did not wish to irritate the girl too much, so she was very pleasant, and did not mention the hated name, but talked of other things until bed time.

For a week after this they saw nothing of the man, and Eva began to hope that he would not come again. Fanchette wondered why he did not appear as usual, but she attributed it to some trivial

detention. Dick asked Eva once if she supposed he had been seriously hurt, but she replied that if he had, she thought there would be some mention of it in the newspapers.

"Wouldn't you be sorry for him if he had?" asked Dick, and Eva replied, "I don't really wish him to be killed, but he would not hesitate to give a little helpless live bird to a cat to be tortured, so why should we pity him if he does get hurt? I think he deserves it."

Dick laughed to himself at Eva's ideas of justice, and his heart was much lighter, for some reason, than it had been.

In about a week Will Evers appeared as smiling as ever, in a new suit of clothes, and Eva's heart sank like lead when she saw him. He made some excuse about being detained by business matters, which satisfied Fanchette, and not one word did he drop in regard to the dog. Whether he suspected something was a question to Eva and Dick which they could not decide. After this he came often, and Eva avoided him in every way possible, to his great disappointment. At last he grew desperate, and appealed to Fanchette for her co-operation in the matter.

"I'm getting tired of this," he said irritably. "You encourage me to persevere, and she snubs and avoids me as though I was a pestilence. Can't you use a little authority with the girl? You tell me it is only maidenly shyness that makes her so cold to me, and that she will get over it in time, and you keep me on the string, but I don't get

any satisfaction out of this kind of a game. Why don't you shut her up, and starve her into submission, or do something to help me? You could bring her to time if you only would."

Fanchette's eyes took on a gleam like steel. She arose and came toward him. "Shut Eva up and starve her into submission!" she said, in a low, angry tone. "Well I guess not."

"Then go out and leave her alone in the house with me, and give me the keys," he said, "and I will see if I can't conquer her."

Fanchette stepped to a writing table and pulling out a little drawer, took from it a revolver. "Don't you get too almighty important around here, Will Evers," she said. "I keep this for emergencies, where men get too fresh in this house, and I wouldn't hesitate to use it if the occasion required. There is to be no force used upon Eva, you understand. If you can't win her consent to your wishes, you will have to give up the game. I will help you in every persuasive way in my power, but there shall be no violence used."

"Well, well, don't let's quarrel, Fan," he said forcing a smile. "I didn't really mean what I said, but I want that girl more than I ever wanted anything before in my life, and I mean to have her yet. You'll help me all you can, won't you?"

"I told you I would help you as much as I can by persuasion, but I cannot make the girl like you, and I won't have her treated in any brutal manner. You might as well make up your mind to that, and then we shall understand each other."

"I'll never give her up," he said firmly. "I'll have her yet."

Fanchette laughed. "'And the villain still pursued her,'" she said.

They did not know that Eva had overheard their conversation, but such was the fact, and she began to realize that this man was going to prove the bane of her existence. How was she ever to escape from his hateful and persistent attentions? She pondered the matter in her mind for two or three days, and then said to Dick:

"It is no use, Dick, I can't turn around without that detestable man is at my elbow. What shall I do? How can I get rid of him? Can't you think of something—some way to shake him off for good?"

"I've been thinking about it ever since he came back after the dog bit him," said Dick, thoughtfully, "and I don't know of but one way for you to do, and that is to leave home—go away somewhere where he can't find you. That is the only way you can get rid of him, unless you poison him or blow him up with dynamite," he added, smiling, "and you would hardly like to resort to such measures unless everything else failed."

"But, Dick!" gasped Eva, "I don't know where to go. I haven't a friend in all this world but you and Fanchette. Where could I go?" she stopped short, and looked at him with wide open eyes.

"I have been thinking of that, too," said Dick, "and I don't know of but one place, and that is the village I was telling you about; where I went

with the fresh air kids. You could go there, and go to the house of the man I staid with, and tell him I sent you, and you could work about the house and help his wife enough to pay your board until he could find a place for you somewhere. His name is Ephriam Jones, and he is a good man. You would be all right in his house. I had a good time when I was there. I didn't like Mrs. Jones so well as I did him, but you could get along with her for awhile, anyhow, and maybe when you are gone, and Fanchette thinks she has lost you, she will send this Will Evers packing."

"But how would I get there? Could I walk? I haven't got a cent to my name. Why can't you go with me, Dick?"

"I'd go with you in a minute if it wasn't for"—he glanced at the old dog who lay in his bed behind the stove—"poor old Tipsy."

"I never thought of him," said Eva. "Of course you couldn't leave him, and he can't walk any distance, and he's too heavy to carry. No, you can't leave him, for there would be no one to care for him, and your step-father would throw him out of the window and break his poor old bones, if you were not here."

"He is so old and feeble he can't live very much longer," said Dick, "and it would be a mercy to him to chloroform him, but I just can't. I have had him ever since I can remember, and I am fourteen. I think my mother got him for me when I was a baby. He and I have been chums all my life, and I can't see him come to any harm, and I can't take his dear old life."

"Oh, I wouldn't have you think of it for anything!" cried Eva. "If I go away you will take care of my kitten, won't you? I would like to take him with me, but I don't believe I had better. I will leave him in your care, for I shall surely come back to you, Dick, sometime, and Oh! I hate to leave Fanchette."

"Well, don't decide too quick," said the boy. "Take time to think it over. It is the only plan I can think of, but don't let Fanchette get wind of it, on your life."

"Of course not. I'll think it over and let you know."

For a few days things went on much as usual. Will Evers came every night, and Eva was kept busy devising ways and means to keep out of his way. At last she grew so weary of it all, she went to Dick, and said: "I have decided to go to that place you told me about. I can't stand this any longer. If you will tell me how to get there I will start the first chance I have to get away without Fanchette's seeing me. When I get there if the people won't have me, I can come back, but I shall stay there if there is any way I can manage to make a living."

"I'll write a letter to Mr. Jones," said Dick, "and you can take it with you. He will remember me. It was only five years ago that I was there. I'll go with you to the train and see that you get started right."

"But, Dick," interrupted Eva, "you forget I haven't one cent to pay my fare. Can't I walk if I take plenty of time?"

"There is a way that the people of Greendell drive to the city, but I don't know the road. It takes a long time that way. If you go on the cars you will not have to walk more than ten miles, while this other way would be a great deal longer. You will have to take the train and get off at a station called Meadowville, and there ask anybody to tell you the way to Greendell, and if you start out on the road afoot some farmer will most likely come along and ask you to ride, so you will get there all right. I have got five dollars you can have. The old gent gave it to me the last time he was flush, and has not asked me for it back again yet, so that will pay your fare, and you will have some left. I think the fare is a little less than two dollars. When do you want to go?"

"The very first chance I have. Some day when Fanchette goes out. You will go with me to the depot?"

"Of course, and buy your ticket, and get you on the right train, and then I am sure you will get along first rate. If anything should happen that Tipsy should die, I will come right after you just as fast as I can and bring your kitten in a covered basket, and we will live in Greendell as long as we want to, see?"

"I see, and it is the very best thing to do, I'm sure. How good you are to me, Dick. What should I have done without you?"

Thus the question was settled, and they waited only for an opportunity to carry it into effect. It came at last. Fanchette went shopping with one

of the women of her own class, who lived on the same street, and as she did not like to have Eva hear the coarse language which some of them used she had never been in the habit of allowing her to accompany them. Therefore there was nothing said in regard to Eva when the two women left the house. Eva went to her room and put on the plainest dress and hat she had; put a few necessary articles in a bundle; sat down and wrote a note to Fanchette, telling her just why she was leaving; and after hugging and kissing her kitten, and dropping a few tears on his soft fur, she went to Dick's rooms and rapped softly.

The old man was stretched on a lounge in a drunken slumber, and Dick was putting away the remnants of a cold lunch. When he saw Eva and noted how she was dressed he knew the time had come. Hastily seizing a pasteboard box he jammed some articles of food into it, and going into his wardrobe soon reappeared ready for the street. Eva motioned silently to the man on the lounge, but Dick smiled and nodded reassuringly, and when they were outside, said: "He'll be like that for two or three hours, and by that time I'll be back."

They made their way to the station, and Dick purchased her ticket, and gave her what remained of the five dollars, with many injunctions not to lose it. Then he put the box of lunch into her hands and they sat down to wait for the train, while he gave her all the advice he could think of, about the journey, and the people of the village.

"Don't tell them too much about yourself," he

said. "Just tell them that your parents are both dead, and you were obliged to take care of yourself, and that you thought you would prefer the country to the city, and that was the reason you came there to get work. Tell them that you had heard me say what a beautiful place Greendell was, and that will please them. A little flattery is a good thing sometimes. You will find my letter to Mr. Jones in that box of lunch. You'd have to take a lunch or you'd get awful hungry."

"Oh, that makes me think," she said, opening her purse, "I have a little note here that I wrote to Fanchette, to tell her why I went, and if you will put it where she will see it when she gets home, I'll be ever so much obliged. Pin it on her door, or anywhere so she will be sure to find it, but don't let her suspect that you know the least thing about where I am, or why I went. When she tells you I am gone, you want to be just as surprised as anybody, won't you?"

"Sure," he replied, and now don't worry about your kitten or anything, for I will see to that, and if poor old Tipsy dies I'll come to you right away after. Here comes the train, and now good bye."

"Good bye, dear old Dick. What should I have done without you?" Her eyes filled with tears, and turning suddenly she put up her lips and kissed him for the first time since she had known him. He flushed with pleasure as he helped her up the steps onto the platform. "Now remember to get off at Meadowville."

"You may read my note to Fanchette, before you let her have it," she whispered. "Good bye."

The train started before she was seated in the coach. She caught a glimpse of Dick's face through the window, and then she realized that she had started on a new venture, and that this journey might make a great change in her whole life. She felt very much like crying at first, so lonely it seemed to leave all she had once called home, but after a time she became interested in watching the passengers, and in looking out of the window at the swiftly passing landscape, and her spirits rose with every mile as the train sped on.

The two hours had hardly seemed like one, when the brakeman called out Meadowville, and they began to slacken speed. As they came to a stop, she stepped out onto the station platform, and looked about her curiously. It was just a small, box-like depot, and there were no other passengers for that place. When the train had gone on she stepped up to the only man whom she saw about the station and asked if he could tell her in what direction to go to get to Greendell.

The station master looked at her and gave a little gesture of protest. "You can't walk it, Miss," he said, "for it's ten miles if it's an inch. That's the road over there, and a straight road it is. If you follow that road without turning off anywhere you'll get there, but you don't think of walking it, do you?"

"There is no stage that runs from here, is there?" she asked. "You see the people I am going to are not expecting me, so I will have to manage the best I can."

"No," he replied, "there is no conveyance of any kind, but you might get a ride with a farmer, at least part of the way. I'll see if there is anyone about here that's going that way."

He started off while speaking, and Eva thanked him and sat down to wait. In a few minutes he returned and said he had found a man who was going within three miles of there, and she could ride with him as well as not.

"How kind you are," she said gratefully. "I thank you ever so much."

"Not at all, not at all," he said briskly, "I'm glad I could find some one. Here he comes now."

A farmer drove up to the platform. He had a two-seated spring wagon, and invited Eva to "climb in." She obeyed with alacrity, and nodding her thanks once more to the station master, she was whirled rapidly away. How the horses sped over the smooth road; how the sun shone and the birds sang along the way. Past farm houses and woods; over bridges and through little valleys. Eva thought she had never seen such loveliness.

"The horses know they're goin' home, and that's what makes 'em git up an' git so like all git out," said the man. "If I wasn't in such an alfired hurry with my work at home, I'd take ye clear to Greendell."

"Oh, I can walk three miles, just as well as not," said Eva. "I shall enjoy it; the day is so lovely and the country is so beautiful. I am very much obliged to you for this ride. You don't know how I have enjoyed it."

"You're perfectly welcome, Miss. You're from the city, ain't ye?"

"Yes, and I like the country ever so much better. It is so clean and bright, while the city is so smoky and dirty and hot."

"Wal, I never took no notion to the city myself. The country is good enough fer me. Here's yer stoppin' place. I have to turn off here. Now you follow right on this road, and the first village you come to is Greendell." He drew up the horses and Eva alighted, and with a hearty "good bye," the farmer drove away.

Eva walked leisurely on, every now and then pausing by the roadside to pick a wild flower. It was about the middle of the afternoon, and she felt that there was no hurry, so she took her time about walking the three miles, and when she came in sight of the village she did not feel weary in the least. As she entered the little town she asked a boy if he could show her the house of Ephriam Jones. "Right over there," he said, pointing to a yellow house with green blinds, and she thanked him and turned her steps in that direction.

CHAPTER XII.

She ascended the steps and seeing no doorbell, rapped on the door. It was opened by a woman with a stern, forbidding face. She looked at the young girl in stolid surprise. "Does Mr. Ephriam Jones live here?" asked Eva.

"Ephriam Jones died three years ago. I am Mrs. Jones, his widow. Was there something you wanted?"

"I was sent here by a boy who came here five years ago when the fresh air children came out from the city, and he told me to give Mr. Jones this letter." She took out Dick's letter and handed it to the woman.

"Come in," she said, and Eva entered the house and the woman placed a chair for her which she sank into. The woman opened the letter and read it.

"This says you are looking for a home in a private family where you can earn your board and clothes," she said when she had finished it. "I remember the boy, Dick, very well. Why did you leave the city?" She asked the question a little sharply.

"I like the country much better," replied Eva,

"and I have no home or relatives, so I could just as well suit myself in that matter. I have lived in the city so long I am tired of it. I am all alone in the world, and Dick thought the country would be a better place for me than the city."

"How did Dick come to send you here? How long have you known him and where is he now?" asked Mrs. Jones.

"I have known him about three years. He lives with his step-father in rooms in the same building where I lived, so we were neighbors. But the woman I lived with went away and I wanted another place, and Dick advised me to come here instead of trying to find work in the city," said Eva.

Mrs. Jones looked more satisfied with this explanation, and after thinking a moment asked: "What can you do? What did you do where you were last?"

"I can do housework, all but cooking, but I am sure I could learn to do that, only I have never tried. The woman I was with did her own cooking and I did other work about the house."

"Well, I'll try you anyway," said Mrs. Jones, "but I shant pay you any wages. If you want to work for your board and clothes I'll keep you awhile; I can't say how long. That will depend on how we get on together. If you please me, well and good, but if you don't, you'll have to get another place. Come this way and take off your hat." She showed Eva into a tiny bedroom, and telling her to "put her bundle on the bureau and make herself comfortable," left her.

When Eva had made her toilet she came out into the little sitting-room and found Mrs. Jones sitting by a window, sewing.

"Is there anything I can do now to help you?" she asked. "No," replied Mrs. Jones, "you may rest today. I'll find some work for you tomorrow. There is not a great deal to do here, for there is only Eddie and myself, so you won't have to work very hard."

During the three or four days following Eva surprised Mrs. Jones by her ability about the house. She did everything so neatly and quietly, and was so particular to pay attention to any directions which that lady gave her, that her employer was more pleased than she would have liked to own. Eddie, aged eleven, proved a thorn in Eva's side, for he was unruly and impudent to his mother, and always getting into trouble with other boys, but the thing which aroused Eva the most of anything he did was his extreme harshness and lack of feeling for his dog. He was sole owner and proprietor of a handsome water spaniel; a gentle, affectionate little animal, with a bright, intelligent face, and soft pleading eyes. The dog took a great fancy to Eva because she favored him on all occasions, and tried by kindness and petting to make up to him for the abuse he suffered at the hands of his tyrannical young master. As her affection for the dog grew, her dislike and detestation for the boy grew also, and at last she appealed to Mrs. Jones in behalf of Curley and told her that Eddie had been kicking him.

"Oh, well, I can't help it," replied the woman. "I got him the dog to play with, because the boys here are so mean to him. I don't know why it is, I'm sure, but it seems to me that every boy, big or little, in this village, picks on my little Eddie. They whip him and fight him at school, and on the way home, and if I say a word to their mothers about it they stick right up for their own. I suppose that is because I am left a widow, and Eddie has no father to take his part. They think they can do anything to him. I got the dog for him so he could have a playmate right here at home, so he wouldn't be lonesome, and I can't help it if he does play rough with him. It's only a dog, and I guess he can stand it."

Eva saw that there was nothing to be gained by trying to enlist her sympathies, for she soon discovered that the woman had no real sympathies for anything or anyone, but her beloved Eddie. That he flew into a rage quite frequently and kicked and struck his mother did not seem to have the slightest diminishing effect on her tenderness toward him. So Eva said no more, but watched and improved every opportunity to make Curley's lot easier for him. She also discovered that Mrs. Jones was at sword's points with almost every other woman in the village who had a boy old enough to go to school. For all those who were smaller and weaker than Eddie had been whipped by him, and those who were larger and stronger had served him the same way. There was always a tale of woe when he returned from school,

and his mother would sympathize with him, believe every word he said, and blame everybody but him.

She had one neighbor who lived a little farther down the street, and who had no children, with whom she was on friendly terms. Mrs. Bruler often came up to sit awhile, and Mrs. Jones often went there. Eva liked little Mrs. Bruler from the very first, and after a time came to feel very sorry for her, when she found out that her husband, Dan Bruler, was a brutal and dissipated wretch, who abused her and everything with which he came in contact.

How forcibly Fanchette's teaching came to Eva's mind in the days that followed. The oft repeated statement that all men were selfish brutes, and Eva would wonder if it were not true after all, and then her thoughts would revert to Dick, until he seemed the last and only straw to cling to.

On the fifth day after her arrival, Mrs. Jones asked Eva what church she attended.

"I have never been to church," replied Eva.

"What!" cried the woman, stopping short and gazing at the girl with horrified eyes. "Never been to church? Perhaps you read the Bible at home. You read your Bible, I hope."

"No," said Eva, astonished at the woman's vehemance, "I have read a great many books, but not one of that name. I don't believe the woman I lived with had any, for I read all the books she had and a lot that Professor Heilbrun let me take, but I don't remember any by that name."

"Well, Good Lord!" ejaculated Mrs. Jones. "I

should think that here was a case for the missionaries. Well, well, I never. No, I never did."

"Is it something which you think I particularly ought to read?" asked Eva, innocently.

"Why, I didn't suppose there was anybody in this civilized country but what had read the Bible, or heard of it. I'll get mine for you, and I want you to read it all through from Genesis to Revelations. I'll give you a certain length of time every day and evening until you have got clear through it from the beginning to the end."

"Is it a very big book?" asked Eva, "for if it is I can read it through in a short time. I have read many large books, lots of them, but I don't remember of ever seeing that."

"Yes, it is a big book. The Word of God ought to be a big book, oughtn't it? You may go to church with me tomorrow. That will be making a beginning." She hurried through her Saturday's work to get time to run down to Mrs. Bruler's and tell her what a young heathen she had discovered right here at home.

"Talk about foreign missions," she said to her friend. "I should think there was enough for missionaries to do right here in our own cities, if this girl is a sample of what our cities contain."

"But Eva is a beautiful girl and gentle and refined. I never saw a young girl I took more of a liking to," said Mrs. Bruler.

"That aint agoin' to save her soul, her bein' gentle and refined," declared Mrs. Jones, vehemently. "She's got to learn the word of God, and

live up to it. I'll make a Christian of her in a few weeks. See if I don't."

"I hope you will," said Mrs. Bruler. "I wish you every success in the good work, I'm sure."

"I believe God sent her to me on purpose to convert to religion," said Mrs. Jones. "I think it is a special dispensation of Providence. I feel it in my bones."

They went to church the next day, and Eva was the center of all eyes. The people had heard that Mrs. Jones had taken a girl to work for her board, and many were the comments thereon. "I pity the girl," said one woman, "that boy, Eddie, will make her daily life a burden." "Maybe she will get at him some day and straighten the kinks out of him," said another. "If she does, it will be the last day of her stay in that house," said a third. "What a pretty little thing she is," remarked a fourth, and so on and so forth.

When they reached home Mrs. Jones said: "Well, Eva, how did you like the sermon? Don't you think the Rev. Mr. Pheelbad is a smart preacher?"

Eva laughed. "I think if that is his name it is very appropriate, for he seemed to feel bad about some people whom he spoke of as lost, and his regret seemed to be that they might have been saved if they would, and that it was their own fault that they were not. I did not get the sense of it, I'm afraid. I did not understand it at all."

Mrs. Jones looked somewhat shocked. "I suppose you can't be expected to understand it until you have studied the Bible, but we will remedy all

that," she said, more cheerfully than she was in the habit of speaking. For Mrs. Jones was not remarkable for her cheerfulness.

The next day she began her work of conversion by bringing out the family Bible, and telling Eva that she might begin and read two hours in the afternoon and one hour in the evening, after supper. She did not ask her what she thought of it until four days had elapsed, and Eva, who was a rapid reader, had made great progress.

"Well, Eva, what do you think of it?" she asked at the close of the fourth day.

"I don't like it quite so well as I do the Greek Mythology," Eva replied, thoughtfully. "The stories are a good deal on that plan, but I don't think they are so interesting, and I don't like the style of writing so well."

Mrs. Jones' face was a study for an artist at that moment. "Eva, don't ever let me hear you call the Bible uninteresting again! I am shocked. I never heard anyone speak like that. I should think you would be afraid."

"Do you like the book so much?" said Eva in surprise. "I will never say a word about it again if you like it so much that it pains you to hear it criticised. You asked me what I thought, and I simply told you. I don't see why you should care so much whether I like it or not. Hardly any two persons are alike in their tastes on reading matter. Dick and I often differed about a book but we never felt hurt about it. I am sorry I said anything if this is your favorite work."

"You don't understand, Eva. I was shocked to hear you call the word of God uninteresting. Don't you know that it is the word of God?"

"There are not so many gods mentioned in here as there is in the Greek Mythology," said Eva. "There is a mention here of only one, but perhaps there will be more, farther on."

"No! no!" cried Mrs. Jones in despair. "God is the ruler of the world. Our God, the father of Jesus Christ, you understand."

"Do you believe there ever was such a god as is represented in here? The one who was supposed to have made the earth in six days, and who turned Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden?" asked Eva in surprise.

"Yes! yes!" cried Mrs. Jones. "That was God. I believe every word."

"It don't seem to me that he could have understood human nature very well," replied Eva, "for when he told them that there was one tree they must not touch he ought to have known that that would be the one that would interest them most. But you don't really believe that ever happened do you? Professor Heilbrun read me lots of stories about gods and goddesses, but he said that no one was expected to believe them now. That was 'once upon a time,' as they say in fairy tales, the people on earth were very ignorant of all the sciences, and so they allowed their imaginations to supply a reason for things which they could not understand or account for, and that that was the way these stories got started in the

first place. This book says that the earth was made in six days. You don't believe that, do you?"

Mrs. Jones gasped for breath, and before she could speak Eva continued: "Professor Heilbrun said that this earth was probably millions of years in forming and getting ready to support any kind of life. This book says the stars are lamps placed in the heavens to give light upon the earth. We know better than that. The stars are suns and planets, a great majority of which are much larger and grander than this little earth. I am afraid your education has been sadly neglected, Mrs. Jones. I wish I had the professor's books here for you to read."

Mrs. Jones was speechless for a few moments, and sat gazing at Eva in horror. She could see by the expression of the girl's face that she was perfectly serious and in earnest, and she began to realize that she had undertaken a gigantic task when she started out to convert this fifteen year old child. She tried to calm herself, and at last succeeded so that she spoke without impatience when she said: "Never mind, we will not talk about it any more now. You may go right on reading, and I will have Mr. Pheelbad explain everything in the book that you don't understand. He often calls here, and he can teach you much better than I can. So we will not discuss it; we will leave it for him to explain to your complete satisfaction."

There was nothing more said on the subject for several days. Eva continued her reading as she

had been directed. The next Sunday it stormed, so that Mrs. Jones decided not go to church, so she said prayers at home, as much for Eva's benefit as anything. Before the next Sunday came the Rev. Mr. Pheelbad called, and as Eva had almost finished her reading, Mrs. Jones thought it would be a suitable time for the minister to commence his work of instructing her in the Christian religion, and explaining all the knotty questions which Eva might ask. She accordingly took Mr. Pheelbad into another room and explained the case to him, to the best of her ability. He was interested at once, and agreed with her that it looked like the hand of Providence, Eva's coming to give them a chance to save her soul.

Mrs. Jones then called Eva, and introduced her to the minister, and telling her that he would teach her the truths of the Bible and all the beauties of the Christian religion, she left them alone together, that they might not be in any degree embarrassed by her presence.

The minister began by asking her to listen while he told her the story of the Redeemer. She listened without interruption while he told her the story of Christ's coming into the world to save sinners, and warming to his subject continued on to the crucifixion and ascension. But the fact which he was most anxious to impress upon her mind was that Christ came into the world to save it; that if people would not lose their souls they must believe on him, for in that lay their only salvation.

Eva paid the strictest attention all through his

discourse, and it was very flattering to his hopes when he looked at her earnest face and questioning eyes. At last he paused and asked if she thought she understood all he had said, and if she would like to ask any questions.

"Yes," she said. "You say that only those who believe in Jesus Christ will be saved; all others lost through all eternity?"

"Yes, that is it," he replied. "I see you comprehend me fully."

"Then," said Eva, "what became of the souls of all the millions of people who lived and died before Christ ever came on earth. Were they all lost?"

"Why—ah—why—ah—no," he replied, "of course they were not lost, for they never had the truth taught them. They had never known Christ, so of course they could not be punished for what they did not know. No, they were not lost. The prophets foretold His coming, and all those who believed them would be saved of course."

"But," said Eva, "people do not all believe prophets predictions—at least they do not now-a-days. And I do not see why they should be punished through all eternity if they don't. As I understand it from what you tell me, no one was lost before Christ came, or at least before the prophets had predicted it, but after that, every one who did not believe in Him as the Son of God, was lost, and only those who believed in Him were saved."

"That is the right interpretation," said the minister. "They must accept and believe in Him, in order to save their souls."

"Then," she said, "I don't see how his coming helped the matter any. If none were lost before He came, and after His coming everyone was lost who did not believe Him to be the Son of God it seems to me that it would have been better for the human race if He had not come at all. But as I read the story of Christ I do not see anything in His character that indicates any such vindictiveness. To me His life and character seem filled with sweetest charity to all erring ones. Such patience, and sublime forgiveness He showed, even to those who tortured Him. I can't believe He would destroy anyone, whether they believed Him a god or man."

"I think we have talked enough for once. I will go now and I hope that God will give you light, and a change of heart, for I don't seem to be able to. I pity Mrs. Jones from the bottom of my heart, for your heathenism is an awful trial to her."

"I am sorry I have disappointed you so," she said, "but why should you and Mrs. Jones care what I think about all this? I never take it so much to heart just because others don't always agree with me. They may think as they please, and I can do the same, so long as it does not injure anyone."

"I may discuss this with you some other time," he said. "I don't feel equal to any more just now. But I will say this to you as a warning; you must believe the Bible. You must also believe in Jesus Christ or you will be lost through all eternity."

He walked out of the room with an air of most severe displeasure, while Eva gazed after him, wondering what there was in what she had said which had so offended him.

He told Mrs. Jones that he had never found so hardened a case of absolute unbelief in one so young, and expressed it as his opinion that no one would ever make her see things as she should. "For you know, Mrs. Jones, 'there are none so blind as those who won't see,' and nothing seems to awe this girl. She says things that would make one's flesh creep, and thinks no more of it than as though she was speaking of the weather. It makes me feel bad. I hope you can make her see the necessity for her to believe in the Bible, but I am afraid her's is a hopeless case. Perhaps her day of grace is past. We don't know."

"I'll do the best I can, Brother Pheelbad," said Mrs. Jones. "I'll try my best, with the help of God, to convert her."

After this there was a feeling of embarrassment between the two women. When Eva had finished the reading of the scriptures, Mrs. Jones asked her if she was any more inclined to accept the truths of the Bible than when she last questioned her, and Eva replied gently, that she was sorry to disappoint Mrs. Jones, but truth compelled her to confess that she was no nearer to believing it than she was before.

Mrs. Jones drew her lips into a hard line, but said no more on the subject for several days, but it was easy to see that she did not feel as friendly

toward the young girl as she had done. In a few days the Rev. Mr. Pheelbad called again, and labored long and earnestly to convince Eva that the Bible was every word true, but he was always met by the question, "How do you know? What proof is there that it is any truer than any other old book of ancient myths and legends?"

"Because it is the word of God, and it is sinful and wicked to question the word of God," he would reply, and then she would ask: "How do you know it is the word of God? Where is God? What is God?" and similar questions, until the minister was in despair. "You must believe it, "he would say, and she would reply, "I can't believe one-half of it, for it does not look reasonable. How can I believe anything when I can't? Do you want me to lie to you and say that I do believe it when I don't?"

"Most certainly not," he said sternly. "But I can't see what makes you so sceptical. Other people believe it; why shouldn't you? You are a strange girl. I don't know what to say to you to make you see things in the proper light. Just think what self-sacrifices have been made by people who loved God. There we have for instance, the story of Abraham and Isaac. You read that I suppose?"

"Yes," said Eva.

"There you see a beautiful spirit of submission and love and childlike faith in the self-sacrifice of Abraham when he was ready to give up his own son as a sacrifice to the Lord because He asked it

of him. Don't you think that is a very beautiful story?"

Eva shuddered and looked up at the minister in astonishment. "Do you call that a beautiful story?" she said. "Why I thought it was horrible, barbarous, for a man to try to burn his own son. I guess if you had been Isaac you wouldn't have thought it was very beautiful. Why, if Abraham had lived in the city and he had been caught attempting such a thing the authorities would have nabbed him and rushed him off to jail, and such a flimsy excuse as 'his being commanded by the Lord to do it' would not help his case any. For they would have him examined, and if he was insane, they would shut him up in an asylum where he could not injure anyone. Why, the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals would not allow him to torture the poor ram that was caught by its horns in the thicket. They would arrest him for that, no matter how much he might declare that God told him to. I think Abraham was a dangerous man and ought not to have been allowed to run at large for the safety of the rest of the community, for no one could tell when he would take it into his head that God wanted him to kill someone."

The minister sat looking at Eva with an expression of horror on his face, which gradually deepened to one of intense anger. "You have said things that sound blasphemous," he said. "I tell you if you don't come to the proper faith you will lose your soul."

"If I do," said Eva, smiling, "it certainly won't be your fault."

"There seems to be no use of discussing the blessed Bible with one so hardened as you, for all you care to do is to pick it to pieces and try to show it up in the most ridiculous light." He then went to Mrs. Jones and told her what little progress he had made.

That lady looked severe. "I don't like the girl as well as I did," she said. "I can't help a feeling of dislike towards her for her sinful, wicked unbelief. I don't believe my patience will last much longer. Either she will have to pay proper attention to religion or she will have to get another home."

After this Mrs. Jones was barely civil to Eva, and went about the house with her lips set, and a stern expression upon her face, which relaxed only when Eddie demanded attention. She spoke to the young girl only when it was necessary to give her directions about the work, and for a week the situation was a very uncomfortable one. At last one day Mrs. Jones went away to spend the day, and left Eva to keep house, and see to Eddie when he came home from school.

Eva busied herself about the house-work, and laid out Eddie's lunch for him, and then sat down to do a little sewing which Mrs. Jones had left for her in case she had the time to do it after the other work was attended to. Master Eddie took the dog, Curley, and went out into the yard, where he amused himself by throwing sticks into

his mother's flower-bed for Curley to bring out, and enjoyed thoroughly the havoc which it wrought among the plants.

While engaged in this he happened to glance up and saw going past the house, a boy who had worsted him in a fight only the day before. He knew there was no use of trying to conquer him in a battle for the boy was clearly "too much for him," but there burned in his breast a desire for revenge, so calling Curley, and pointing to the boy he said "sic 'im." Curley dashed out, and seeing the boy, bounded about and tried to play with him. Eddie cried "sic 'im! sic 'im!" and the boy looked around. But the dog, being endowed with more decency than his master, refused to "sic 'im." Then the boy who had stopped to see what Eddie intended to do called out: "Yer dog's got more sense than you have. You tried to lick me yesterday and got licked yerself, and yer dog knows better than to try it on, see?"

Eddie was furious. He flew into a rage, and seizing Curley by the collar, dragged him up the steps and into the house. As he passed Eva where she sat sewing, she asked him what he was going to do with Curley.

"I'm goin' to show him that when I tell him to sic 'im he's got to do it," he said going to the umbrella rack and drawing therefrom a large, heavy cane. He opened the door to the cellar-way and prepared to descend, giving the dog a kick to make him go through the doorway.

"You are not going to whip Curley with that great cane?" cried Eva in alarm.

"I'm goin' to do as I'm a mind to with my own dog, I guess, and you'd better mind you own business or you'll wish you had," he replied as he disappeared down the cellar stairs.

A few moments of silence followed, then came the sound of a blow together with a shrill cry of pain from the dog. Eva waited a moment, but another blow and pitiful cry from the little animal she had grown to love, rendered her desperate. With a bound she reached the cellar door, ran down the stairs and the sight that met her eyes aroused all the spirit she possessed. Poor Curley was fastened to the leg of a table, and over him stood the young tyrant with the thick cane grasped in both hands to give more power to the blow he was about to deliver. Curley's soft, appealing eyes were turned pleadingly upward, mutely imploring mercy.

Eva bounded upon Eddie and snatched the cane from his hands. He turned upon her with tigerish ferocity, and snatching up his jack-knife which lay on the edge of the table, he made a vicious lunge at her, which she was so lucky as to dodge in time. She caught him by his coat collar, and then began a battle such as she had never anticipated. He continued to strike at her with the knife but she rained blows upon him with the cane and while he howled and kicked and struck out fiercely she gave him such a chastisement as he never had had before, even from the bigger boys.

She did not stop until he ceased fighting and began to whine and beg, then she let him go, and

stooping down, unfastened Curley and patted his glossy head. "Poor little dog," she said, "it was a cruel fate which consigned you to the mercy of this fiendish little wretch, but I think he knows how it feels, himself, now."

"I'll tell my mother on you," he whimpered. "My mother'll just about kill you for this; you see if she don't."

Accordingly when his mother returned, he went to her with his tale of woe, and his mother listened in ominous silence. When he had finished and she had petted and kissed him, she arose and stood before Eva.

"Did you whip Eddie with that cane?" she asked, in an awful voice.

"I did," replied Eva.

"Then you will never stay another night beneath my roof. You may go and pick up your things."

Eva said nothing more, for she had seen enough of Mrs. Jones to know that explanations would be worse than useless. She knew that if Eddie had killed the dog and his mother had witnessed the performance, she would still be of the same mind. She had got the dog to amuse the boy and the boy had a right to amuse himself with it in any way that best suited him, regardless of the feelings of that animal. Dogs should not be too particular. Mrs. Jones had been often heard to say that animals were created solely for the use of man, to do his bidding, and once when she had expressed that opinion very strongly in Ely Nayburn's hearing, he asked her to what particular line of work

or usefulness God had intended man to put the rhinoceros. A question which she pronounced "disgustingly unreasonable and stupid."

Eva gathered up her belongings with a lighter heart than might have been expected under the circumstances, for the strained relations which had existed between them for the past few days had worn upon her spirits. She felt that it would be a relief to get away from this house. She thought she would go and bid Mrs. Bruler good bye, and then return to the city. Perhaps that detestable Will Evers was gone by this time, and if so she would return to Fanchette.

Mrs. Jones never opened her lips as Eva walked out, but Curley, who was out on the steps, got up and followed her to Mrs. Bruler's house. She found that little woman ill in bed with a bilious headache, and she begged Eva to stay with her until she was better. "I have these attacks once in a while and they last two or three days. If you have left Mrs. Jones, you will be doing me a great kindness by staying with me," she said. So Eva stayed, and as soon as Mrs. Bruler was able to sit up, she told her about her trouble with Mrs. Jones. Mrs. Bruler listened attentively and when Eva had finished she said: "I am glad that for once in his life that boy got what he needed. How the women in this place will rejoice when they hear it. She has quarreled with more than half of the women in this village about that unruly little reprobate. I'm glad you caned him, Eva"

CHAPTER XIII.

Before Eva had been in the Bruler house three days she had become very fond of Mrs. Bruler, and as that little lady seemed to fully reciprocate her affection she could have been very happy and contented there if there had been no other inmate; but she found that the master of the house, Dan Bruler, was about as contemptible a specimen of the human family as it is possible to find. Mrs. Bruler's home life was a horror such as Eva had only dreamed of in all she had heard and read of inhuman brutes. His tyranny and abuse of his uncomplaining wife made Eva's blood boil. How many times she wished she had the strength of a man, so that she could give him the punishment he so richly deserved, and his conduct kept her constantly in mind of Fanchette's teachings in regard to marriage being the one thing most to be avoided in life.

He seldom addressed a civil word to Mrs. Bruler, generally emphasizing his remarks to her with an oath. He flew into a towering rage upon the slightest provocation, and often upon no provocation whatever. He found fault with everything she did, and growled about things which he thought

she ought to do. He pushed her roughly out of his way if she chanced to get into it, and if there was anything which he knew she particularly liked he studiously avoided getting it.

One day after he had been more harsh and brutal than usual, he strode out, slammed the door, and left the house.

Mrs. Bruler, accustomed as she was to him and his ways, was feeling nervous and nearly ill, and not in a mood to bear as much as usual, and after he had gone she burst into tears, and throwing herself on a lounge, sobbed audibly. Eva sat down beside her and softly stroked her hair, and bending down kissed her on the forehead. "Never mind," she said soothingly. "I love you and I know just what awful creatures men are."

Mrs. Bruler sat up and looked at Eva in surprise, a little smile struggling over her face in spite of her misery.

"What do you know of men, my dear child?" she said. "What dreadful experience have you ever had?"

"Oh, I have seen and heard and read a good deal about them, and Fan—" she hesitated, for she had never spoken Fanchette's name since coming to Greendell.

"What were you going to say, dear?" asked Mrs. Bruler, seeing that Eva hesitated.

"I was going to say that the woman I lived with before I came to this place had been married three times, and she always told me that all men are bad; that there are none of them who are worth thinking of twice."

Mrs. Bruler sighed. "Your friend must have had a very bitter experience, to make such a sweeping assertion," she said. "There are some good men in the world. My father was a good man, and there are some good men right here in Greendell. So you see, Eva, your friend was mistaken."

"Well," said Eva, reflectively, "I don't think I like good men any better than I do bad ones. Mr. Pheelbad is a good man, isn't he? Mrs. Jones says he is one of the best."

"I suppose he is," replied Mrs. Bruler. "I am not much acquainted with him."

"Well, then," said Eva, "if he is one of the best, I don't think there is anything to choose between a good and a bad man."

"Why, Eva, what fault can you have to find with the minister?"

Eva related her experience in reading the Scriptures with the explanations given by the Rev. Mr. Pheelbad. "I couldn't believe any such unreasonable stories," she said, "and both he and Mrs. Jones seemed to dislike me for it. I could have told them a lie and pretended to believe, but Professor Heilbrun—the old man who taught me my lessons—told me never to tell lies. He said that the people in this world had been told too many lies already, and that what people needed the most of anything, was the truth. Well, when I told the truth, Mr. Pheelbad and Mrs. Jones didn't seem to like it very well and they kept telling me that I must believe, and I couldn't. Anyone can't believe anything when they can't, can they? If anyone told you an un-

reasonable yarn, and said you must believe it, could you do it just because they wanted you to?"

Mrs. Bruler smiled. "Why, no," she said, "if one can't, one can't, of course. Didn't you ever read the Bible until you came here?"

"No, I never had seen the book before, that I remember of. I have read lots and lots of books. I have studied lots of histories, and other things, among them was geology and astronomy, and I was very much interested in them, and old Professor Heilbrun was the nicest man I ever saw, and he explained things in such a sensible way that one could see that what he said was true. But Mr. Pheelbad and Mrs. Jones wanted me to believe things because they were in the Bible, that were contrary to everything I had learned from Professor Heilbrun. They wanted me to believe that this earth was created in six days, when Professor Heilbrun taught me that it took millions of years. They wanted me to believe that the sun and moon stood still one whole day for Joshua to fight, when we know that the sun and moon could not do anything of the kind, without throwing the whole planetary system into confusion and destruction, and there were other things like that which they tried to make me believe. Then toward the last of the book, when we got to the story of Christ, they told me if I didn't believe that story, I would surely lose my soul, and they were offended with me because I wouldn't say I did believe it, when I didn't. And what I can't understand is that they should care enough

about what I did or did not believe, to get mad about it. If I do lose my soul, as they say, it will be my own loss, won't it? What have they got to be mad about? I would be the only sufferer by it, wouldn't I? But I know they have never liked me so well, since."

"Never mind, my dear," said Mrs. Bruler, "I want you to stay with me just as long as you can. I would like to keep you with me always. It makes no difference to me what you believe or disbelieve. You are like sunshine in the house, and I need you every day. My life is not quite so unbearable since you came. You see how things are and understand how I need one true heart on which I can lean for comfort. You are a dear, sweet, truthful, honest, little girl, and I love you already, Eva."

Eva's eyes filled with tears. "Dear Mrs. Bruler," she said, "I don't understand why you endure it. Why don't you run away and go where he cannot find you?"

"I have been sorely tempted to, but I try to remember my marriage vows, which were that I would 'take him, for better, for worse, to love honor, and obey until death.'"

"But you can't do all that, it seems to me, for you can't love him, can you?"

"I'm afraid not."

"And you don't honor him, do you?"

"I can't."

"Well, then, I don't see how you can be expected to stay with him till death. Why do they make

laws that ask people to promise things which they are not sure they can do, even if they try? I don't believe in marriage. It is a good deal like asking someone to believe something which there is no proof of. Fanchette says that marriage is a big fraud, a gigantic swindle, and I guess there is more truth than poetry in what she says. She has been married three times, so she would know."

"Marriage is all right, Eva, if the parties are congenial. If the two who enter into the marriage contract are devoted to each other, marriage is a heaven upon earth. It is only where they are uncongenial that they turn out unhappily."

"Then I guess they are all uncongenial," said Eva, "for I have never known of any other kind. Have you?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Bruler, "I have known of a few cases where the husband and wife were perfectly devoted to each other, even into old age. There is a case of that kind right here in Greendell. A Mr. and Mrs. Brown, who are very poor, and live in a tiny house on the edge of the village. They are just as much in love with each other as they ever were. They are happy and cheerful even in their poverty because they have each other."

"And you are sure that he never swears at her or grumbles, and finds fault, or gets drunk, or any of those things that men do?"

"Old Mr. Brown is one of the nicest, kindest old gentlemen I ever knew, and she worships him."

"I should think she would," said Eva. "I am glad to know there is one marriage that has turned out well."

A shadow passed the window, and looking out they saw Mrs. Jones going around to the side door. Mrs. Bruler went to admit her. Mrs. Jones was rather cool in her manner, and did not notice Eva when she passed through the room.

Mrs. Bruler treated her caller just as she always had, and ignored that lady's frigid manner. After speaking of the weather and the latest events in the village, Mrs. Jones cleared her throat and said: "I see you have taken my girl into your house and are keeping her right along."

"She came here one day saying she had left your house, and was going back to the city, so I asked her to stay with me. I am glad to have her," said Mrs. Bruler, pleasantly.

"I presume she hasn't told you how she beat poor little Eddie with a great, heavy cane, one day when I went away and left the little fellow in her care. But if she thought she could do that and I not find it out, she made a mistake, for the poor little boy told me as soon as I got home."

"Well, I need her here, so I am glad to get her," replied Mrs Bruler, "and as I have no children, there will be no danger of any such quarrels. I find her very quiet and gentle and I have no fault to find with her."

"She is a vicious, wicked girl!" cried Mrs. Jones. "I tell you, you will be sorry yet, that you took her in. She won't believe the Bible, and she wouldn't be a Christian, even after Mr. Pheelbad explained it to her, and spent his time trying to make her see the truth. She was wilful and ob-

stinate to the very last, and positively refused to be saved. There is no religion in her."

"Oh, well, that won't make any difference to me," replied Mrs. Bruler. "I like Eva, and I can get along with her. It is nothing to me what she does or does not believe."

"Then you won't send her away? You will keep her in spite of all she has done?"

"I'll keep her as long as I can, certainly," replied Mrs. Bruler, a little coldly.

"Then I'll bid you good-day," said Mrs. Jones, marching out with all the dignity at her command. She had come for the purpose of turning the scales against Eva, and failed, and went home in a very unpleasant frame of mind. As she passed out of Mrs. Bruler's yard, she saw Curley lying on the front door-step. She called him and he came to her, but no amount of coaxing would induce him to accompany her home. Happening to look up she saw Mrs. Bruler's smiling face at the open window.

"Do you encourage my dog to stay here, also?" asked Mrs. Jones, angrily.

"He does not need any encouragement," replied Mrs. Bruler, smiling, "he stays here of his own free will."

"She's all in sympathy with that little hussy," muttered Mrs. Jones, as she walked rapidly homeward.

One thing that Eva noticed, and wondered at, was Mrs. Bruler's treatment of Curley. The little dog stayed with them all the time, never going

home even for a short visit. Mrs. Bruler was very kind to him, and petted him when Dan Bruler was not about the house, but as soon as he appeared she assumed the utmost indifference, almost amounting to dislike toward Curley. One day Eva questioned her as to her reason for this, and she replied that if her husband thought she disliked the animal and was annoyed by it, he would be perfectly willing to have it about the place, but if she should evince the least affection for it, he would either kill it or drive it away.

"I had a canary once," she said "and he knew I loved the sweet little singer, so he killed it one day when I was out. I found it with its head crushed in, and quite dead, in the bottom of its cage, when I came home. I should have taken warning by that, not to try to keep any pets, but I was foolish enough to get a kitten, for I wanted something I could love, and one day when he was angry, he took it by the tail and dashed its brains out against a tree, right before my eyes. Then I never tried to get any more pets, for I knew what their fate would be. I used to suffer tortures at the way he treated our horse, until one day when he was out on the street with a heavy load, and was whipping the poor animal unmercifully because it could not draw it, one of our neighbors—a man named Ely Nayburn—saw him, and had him arrested for cruelty, and the justice fined him ten dollars. After that he was pretty careful how he used the horse, for fear of another such experience, and he knows that the next fine would be heavier.

But he hated Ely Nayburn so for a long time that I was afraid he would kill him out of revenge. I hope you will be very careful and do nothing to anger him, for you could not live under this roof with him if you did, and Oh, Eva, I want you to stay with me as long as possible, for you are like a sunbeam in the house. You have brightened my life more than you can realize since you came."

"How you must hate him," cried Eva. Her blue eyes were almost black with the intensity of her feelings. "I should think you would hate him so that you would wish he was dead. How can you endure to live such a life?"

"One can get accustomed to almost anything in time," answered Mrs. Bruler with a sigh, "and I am not the only one in this world who is unhappy. There are others just as miserable."

"But I don't think it is fair for one person to be allowed to spoil another person's life. I can't see any sense in it. If that is marriage I don't wonder that Fanchette was determined to keep me from it. She always said I should never marry. Of all things she declared that to be the worst, and I guess she was right in her opinion of it."

"But, my dear child, all men are not bad. Some marriages are happy and turn out well. I know a number of good, kind men, and some of them have wives who are making their lives perfectly miserable."

"Then why don't you leave your merciless tyrant and get one of them? I'm sure you could make him happy, and if he was good to you, everything would be much better for you both."

"Oh, my dear, you don't understand the ways of the world at all. I'm sure I don't see how you came to grow up like a little wild rose without any training. But people can't change their husbands and wives as they do their clothes, and cast them aside if they don't happen to suit."

"Well, I'm sure I don't see why they shouldn't," said Eva. "Why ought a person to be unhappy and wretched all through life, just because they made a mistake and got taken in? There certainly ought to be some way out of it."

"Some people do separate and get divorces, but I don't really believe in doing so. It never seemed just right to me. I suppose I take a very serious view of marriage, but it has always seemed to me that I ought to keep my marriage vows just as I would any solemn promise; but I am glad that life does not last forever, and in Heaven—they say—there is no marriage, or giving in marriage, so there I shall be free."

"Are you a Christian?" asked Eva.

"I try to be."

"Is your husband a Christian, too?"

"I hardly think he is."

"Then according to Mr. Pheelbad's theory, he won't go to the same place you do, so you will get rid of him for good, then. I should think you would be glad of that, for if he was a Christian, too, he would go to Heaven with you, and then he could follow you about and torment you forever."

"People are not supposed to go to Heaven, Eva,

unless they are good. If my husband wants to get to Heaven he will have to be a good man."

"Oh, not necessarily," said Eva. "The Rev. Mr. Pheelbad says that if one will only believe the story of Christ that is all that is necessary. All they have to do is to say, 'Lord, I believe,' and if they are thieves, or even murderers, it will save them. He says if their sins be scarlet, they will be white as snow after that. He said that no matter how good or honest a man or woman might be, they couldn't be saved unless they believed in Christ, so I suppose there will be a good many honest, kind-hearted people in hell because they didn't believe any more than I did, because they couldn't. They'll be lost according to his theory, but I don't believe one word of it."

"Oh, well, Eva, it is all a great mystery, and all we can do is to have faith, and hope that all will be well, and do the very best we can. What is to be, will be."

"Mr. Pheelbad said that if anyone would have faith they could move a mountain. Just command it to move and it would do their bidding. I thought at first that he was crazy, but Mrs. Jones said that good Christians have that kind of faith, and I asked her if any of them had ever moved even a hill, with it, and she didn't like it because I asked her that, and she did not make me any answer."

Mrs. Bruler laughed. "You asked them more questions than they wanted to answer, my dear. I should like to have been there and seen them during your cross examination."

A day or so after this conversation Eva said: "I would like to ask you a question, Mrs. Bruler."

"Well, what is it, my dear?"

"Is there a place in this village that is called the haunted house? The boy who sent me here said there was. He said he saw the place when he was here five years ago."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Bruler, "it stands on the outer edge of the village. We will walk out there some day, if you like, and go through the grounds. You would hardly care to go into the house, I presume."

"Oh, yes I would!" cried Eva. "I have read lots of ghost stories—but of course nobody believes them—and I have always wanted to see a real haunted house. That is, one that is said to be really haunted."

"Then we will go there some day," said Mrs. Bruler, smiling at Eva's enthusiasm.

As time passed Eva was conscious of a growing feeling of homesickness, a longing to see Fanchette and Dick. When she first came to the village the novelty of everything and the beauty of the country had taken up her attention to the exclusion of everything else, but now she had been away from home seven weeks and the desire to see the dear familiar faces became at times almost more than she could bear. If she could have been sure that her hateful persecutor had gone for good she would have returned to the city by the next train, but the dread of meeting the detestable Will Evers decided her to wait a while longer. Mrs.

Bruler was very kind to her, and if it had not been for the brutality of the master of the house, she would have been quite content. As it was, she felt that her presence in the house afforded some slight protection to its mistress, for it served to moderate, to some extent, his vile language to her.

CHAPTER XIV.

One day Dan Bruler went away on one of his periodical sprees and was gone two weeks. Eva and Mrs. Bruler were alone excepting for Curley's presence in the house.

As the man had taken the horse, Mrs. Bruler had no idea how far he had gone. There were little hamlets or villages scattered through the country at intervals of a few miles, and as he was acquainted with all the kindred spirits for drinking and carousing, she had no way of knowing in what direction he had gone.

They took advantage of his absence to put the little house in perfect order, for anything in the line of house-cleaning always put him into the worst of humors when he was about, and Mrs. Bruler even decided to plant some rosebushes in a corner of the yard, hoping that he would not notice them when he did come home.

"Mr. Nayburn promised to give me the plants whenever I wanted to set them out," she said to Eva, "but I told him I would wait till some time when Dan was away from home. I'll let you take a note over there for me, Eva, and either he or Mrs. Nayburn will get them for you." She pointed out the house and Eva went on the errand.

She found Ely Nayburn and Cindy among the flowers and plants in their garden. Ely was stirring the soil and loosening up the earth where the last heavy shower had packed it down too solidly, and Cindy was making a variety of suggestions in regard to what she thought ought to be done, to all of which he paid little attention, going on with his work as he thought best.

"Why don't you pull up that long, straggly weed that's runnin' all over the bed among them geraniums?" she said impatiently.

"Why, Cindy, that is your wonderful little mauranda vine you planted the seed for so carefully."

"I know better, Ely Nayburn. I guess I know a mauranda vine when I see one. Pull it up, I say."

"But it's all full of buds; its almost ready to blossom," he said.

"It's nothin' but a weed, I tell you. Men don't know nothin' about flowers and you're one of the biggest fools in the lot," she said scornfully, her eyes growing sullen with anger.

"All right, up she comes," he said, putting the spade under the root and lifting it out. As he did so a branch of the vine which had been almost hidden under a geranium plant was drawn into view, bearing a sweet, delicate little lavender-colored flower. He laid the uprooted vine at her feet, and called her attention to the blossom.

"Put it right straight back in the ground this minute," she said. "It is my mauranda vine. I wouldn't lose it for anything. You ought to have

known better than to dig it up. Ely Nayburn, you're the biggest fool I ever see in all my life. What did you dig it up for? Just to be mean, I suppose."

"You insisted that I should, Cindy. I did as you told me to."

"It's no such a thing!" she retorted angrily. "I never told you to dig up my mauranda vine. I thought it was a weed."

Just at this juncture Eva came into the garden and gave the note to Ely. Cindy watched him suspiciously while she also kept an eye on Eva.

"You're Mrs. Bruler's little new girl, ain't you, dear?" she said in coaxing tones as though speaking to a small child.

"I have been with Mrs. Bruler only a short time," replied Eva.

"Aint you goin' to stay there right along?"

"For a time, at least. I cannot tell how long."

"What's wanted, Ely?" Cindy said, coming to him and trying to read the note over his shoulder.

"Mrs. Bruler is ready to set out those rose bushes I promised to give her. They are in the boxes behind the house, you know.

"Dan's gone away, aint he?" she asked, turning to Eva. Eva answered in the affirmative.

"You cannot carry them," said Ely. "I planted them in boxes of earth so that they could be moved any time and the boxes broken away from them so they could be set out without disturbing the roots. I'll carry them over right away, for I suppose she wants to get them planted before Dan gets home."

Eva thanked him and turned to go, but before she reached the street she heard Cindy say in tones of suppressed rage:

"You aint goin' over there one step when Dan Bruler is away from home. Roses or no roses, I won't have it. A nice time you'd have a-settin' out rosebushes with Mrs. Bruler. I know you, Ely Nayburn, and you aint goin' one step."

For answer he strode away and soon returned with the two boxes, but Cindy planted herself before him ere he had taken ten steps toward the street. He stopped an instant and looked at her, then turning went swiftly out through a side path and started down the street toward Bruler's. She waddled after him, calling to him to come back until she saw that pursuit was useless, then she returned, and taking up the mauranda vine, dug a hole in the flower bed and set it in again, her tears falling fast upon it.

"He's the meanest man I ever see," she said between her sobs, "but I'll fix him when he comes home."

Mrs. Bruler had told Eva that when they had completed the tasks which she thought necessary to accomplish during Dan Bruler's absence they would take the time some day to visit the haunted house. They looked forward to it with mutual pleasure, but the night before the day on which they decided to go, Dan Bruler drove into the yard with a foam-covered horse on which were the marks of the cruel lash. He was only able to get

into the house, where he fell full length on the kitchen floor and lay cursing for a time.

Mrs. Bruler hastened out to the relief of the suffering horse which she unhitched and put in the stable, and having made the animal as comfortable as she could, she hurried back to the house.

Assisting her husband to his bed, she left Eva to attend to the supper and devoted her own time to the besotted wretch whose every other word was an oath, and who would have done her personal violence had he not been too nearly helpless. That night, some time in the small hours, she came to Eva's bedside and with a frightened look on her sweet face requested Eva to get up quickly, dress herself and go for the village doctor. "I am afraid it is delirium tremens," she said, "and I am afraid to wait any longer. I must have some one here to help me. Just hear that,"—she shuddered as a hoarse sound something between a cry and a growl came to their ears through the partition. "Go first to Nayburn's and ask him to come. I think if any man in this place can control him, he can, and as soon as you have told him go to Dr. Rhine's and tell him to come at once." She hurried back to her charge, while Eva, trembling with terror, caused partly by the hideous sounds which came from the next room and partly by anxiety for Mrs. Bruler's safety, hurried on her clothing, and throwing a shawl about her, left the house and ran swiftly in the direction of the Nayburn home. The night was not dark for the moon was scudding through fleecy clouds, and

Eva never thought of being frightened on her own account. Her one thought now was to get Mr. Nayburn to the house as quickly as possible to protect and assist Mrs. Bruler.

She slowed her steps as she entered the Nayburn dooryard, and stood hesitating an instant, not knowing which door she had better knock at. As she was considering the advisability of going around to the side door, the dog in the house began to bark. Then suddenly a window in the second story was shoved up with a bang, a round, fat face surmounted by a tightly twisted knot of hair appeared in the opening and a voice husky with anger said: "If you don't git out o' them flowers I'll put a gun through ye."

Eva had not thought of being near the flower beds until this ominous warning reached her ears. She stepped out from the shadow of the trees and coming toward the window said in imploring tones: "Oh, Mrs. Nayburn it is only I. Won't you please tell Mr. Nayburn that there is a man in a dreadful condition and they want him to come and help, please."

If there was anything that would arouse every particle of interest and sympathy which Cindy Nayburn possessed, it was sickness or death among her acquaintances. She was all interest at once. "I'll come right down, dear," she said. "I thought you was some boys that have been stealin' my flowers lately. I hope you won't mind what I said about the gun."

The window went down with a bang, and soon

the key turned in the lock of the front door, the round, fat face appearing this time with an expression of the deepest commiseration.

"Ely is puttin' on his clo's just as fast as he can. I told him not to forgit them, and he'll be down in a minute. Now tell me who's sick, and what's the matter with them."

Eva told her all, and she, forgetting all anger and jealousy toward Mrs. Bruler, offered to do anything she could to help in any way. "I knew that poor Dan Bruler would git the tremers some day," she said. "I know folks have been awful down on him, but if he dies I guess they will be sorry they said anything. The tremers is a terrible thing. I know, fer I saw 'em play Ten Nights in a Bar-Room, once, an' it was just awful. I've told Ely lots of times, that Dan Bruler would either have 'em or else git fatally killed some time if he didn't quit drinkin,' didn't I, Ely?"

"You say so many things, Cindy, I can't remem- all of them," replied Ely, who was now ready, and opening the door, motioned Eva to proceed. They left the house and parted as they reached the street, Eva to go for the doctor, while Ely Nayburn started on a run for the Bruler house.

When Eva had aroused the docter and told him what was wanted, he lost no time in preparing to accompany her.

"Poor little woman," she heard him mutter as he prepared his medicine case, "I feel sorry for her."

They started off and Eva had to almost run to keep up with his long, rapid strides. Not a word

was spoken until they had almost reached the house, then Eva, who had been thinking intently, laid her hand on the doctor's sleeve. He looked down at her questioningly, she hesitated a moment, then said: "If there is any hope of his dying you won't save him, will you? Please, sir, you don't know what a wretch he is to her. If he will only die, tonight, how much happier dear Mrs. Bruler's life will be after he is gone. You won't give him anything to save his life, will you?"

The physician looked curiously down at the sweet, earnest face, upturned in the moonlight, and its beauty and innocence touched him deeply.

"My dear child," he said, "do you want me to let him die when I might save him if I would?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" she replied, her blue eyes growing almost black with the intensity of her feelings. "If he would only die it would be the most sensible thing he could do. She will be miserable and unhappy as long as he lives. He swears at her and abuses her all the time. If you could only know what a fiend he is I'm sure you would want him to die, so that she might take some comfort. She is so good and gentle and kind to everything and everybody."

"Well, why don't she leave him, then?" asked the doctor brusquely. "She is not obliged to live with him. There isn't a judge or jury in the land that wouldn't take her side. I've no patience with a woman who will let a man ill-treat her, in this free and enlightened country. There is no sense in it. She can leave him, can't she?"

"She thinks she must not, because she is married to him. She thinks it would be a sin."

"Stuff and nonsense," said the doctor testily. "That is too much like the boy who stood on the burning deck, waiting for his father to tell him to go—to get out of the fire. I always said that boy was more of a fool than a hero. And I think just the same of a woman who will stand a lifetime of abuse when she don't have to."

They reached the house and entered hastily, and Eva directed him to the room whence issued sounds more like those of an angry wild beast than anything human. Then putting her fingers in her ears, she sat down on the stairs, to be within reach if she was needed, and Curley came and lay down on the stair beside her.

In the gray dawn of morning Dr. Rhine and Ely Nayburn coming out of the sick room together, found her huddled up there, fast asleep. The doctor laid his hand gently on her curly head. She awoke with a start, rubbed her eyes and sat up. "You may go to bed now, little girl," he said kindly. "You will not be needed for anything more at present."

"Did he die?" she asked breathlessly.

"No, he will live through this."

"Oh, I am so sorry," she sighed, regretfully. "Where is Mrs. Bruler?"

"She is going to get a little rest, now, and you had better take another nap."

They passed on out of the house, and Curley thrust his cold nose into her hand.

"I'll give you your breakfast, little dog," she said, rising to her feet, feeling cramped in every limb. She went into the kitchen and fed the dog, then going softly upstairs she hesitated at the door of the sick-room. But soft as her footsteps were, Mrs. Bruler heard them and came to the door.

"It's all right now, Eva," she said, with a wan smile. "I am going to lie down and take a nap, and you had better go to your bed and get some sleep."

"But don't you want me to make you some toast and tea, or get something that you can eat?"

"You may, by and by, my dear, but just now we will get some rest."

In a few days Dan Bruler was seemingly as well as ever, and he was filled with a vindictive rage at the thought that Ely Nayburn—the man of all others—should have been called in to "manage" him on the night of his drunken delirium. His temper, which was always of the worst, seemed to be taking on an addition to its already abnormal growth. He suddenly developed an intense jealousy toward Ely Nayburn, and his conduct toward his long-suffering wife was more barbarous than ever. Half a dozen times a day Mrs. Bruler cautioned Eva to be very careful not to do or say anything to turn his anger against her, for Eva's indignation rose almost beyond control, and she could hardly contain her feelings when she witnessed the abuse that was heaped upon her friend.

"You are all the comfort I have," said the little woman to her, "and if you provoke his anger he

will turn you out of the house, and then I shall be alone and have no one. Do you not see how I need you, my dear child, and can you not realize how necessary it is for you to be careful?" And Eva promised compliance.

One day Mrs. Bruler received a letter from an aunt, who lived in another town, and was ill with what she believed to be her last illness, requesting Mrs. Bruler to come to her for a few days at least, as she wished to see her and make some arrangements about her property before she died. Mrs. Bruler broached the subject to the household tyrant in fear and trembling, and met with a pleasant surprise. Her lord and master advised her to go by all means. "For," said he with an oath, "the old girl may leave you some of her money if you jolly her up a little, and if you don't go near her now she surely won't."

So Mrs. Bruler prepared to go, and Eva, with a joyful heart, assisted her to get ready. That her friend was going to have a few days of peace and rest, was a cause for thankfulness.

"But what about you, Eva?" said Mrs. Bruler. "You can't stay here with Dan. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make arrangements for you to stay at Ely Nayburn's while I am gone. They will be glad to have you, for you can help Mrs. Nayburn about her work. I'll take time to see them before I go, but I know they will want you."

"But I can go back to the city," said Eva, her heart bounding with joy at the thought of again seeing Fanchette and Dick. Mrs. Bruler's face

clouded over. She did not fancy having Eva return to the city. From certain things that Eva had unconsciously said during her stay with her, she suspected that the place she had come from in the city was not such a place as she would want a young sister of her's to make her home. It was only a vague suspicion, she had no positive evidence, but she did not like the idea of Eva's going back, though she could hardly have told why if questioned as to her reasons.

She strongly urged, and finally made Eva promise that she would not go back to the city until she returned, and that she would go and stay with the Nayburns if they wanted her; and so it was arranged.

Ely Nayburn and his wife had been discussing that very thing, in the seclusion of their home, soon after the night on which he had been summoned so hastily.

"That girl, Eva, has good blood in her veins, or I am no judge," said Ely. "She shows it in every way."

"If she hadn't," said Cindy, "Mrs. Bruler would give her burdock root and sulphur and molasses till she got her cured up. I know she would do all she could for her."

"No, no, Cindy, I wasn't referring to blood disease. I mean that the girl shows good birth—shows every indication of having come of good stock."

"She's real pretty," said Cindy. "I wish I could git such a girl to stay here and help me, especially when Jessamine comes out here again."

"When did she say she would be here?" asked Ely.

"She's comin' home with Cecil. You know Cecil's up to the city visitin' her, now, and Jessamine said in her last letter that she should come out with Cecil, for a few days, so I suppose it will be when Cecil comes home."

CHAPTER XV.

In the elegant mansion which Jessamine Erlwin called her home, Cecil Lexington was having the time of her life. The invitation to visit there, which she had worked so hard to win, had come at last, and she felt fully repaid for any inconvenience which she had been subjected to in entertaining her friend. The terrible fright she had endured in visiting the haunted house, to please Jessamine, by affording her a unique experience, had been amply rewarded.

In her plain, yet comfortable life in the farmhouse, she had often dreamed of luxuries and tried to imagine herself in a position of ease and wealth, but in all her dreams she had never pictured anything that would at all compare with life as she found it in Jessamine's home.

Before she had been there two weeks an overpowering desire for wealth took possession of her. The thought of "dragging out a miserable existence, buried alive"—as she styled it to herself—"on a farm," became unbearable. What would she not do for such a life as Jessamine led, surrounded by every pleasure!

"I don't see how you can endure Greendell for

even a day," she said to Jessamine. "I shouldn't think anything less than life or death would induce you to ever go there, and yet you visit your uncle for two or three weeks at a time. I don't wonder that you felt so much in need of amusement that you proposed the haunted house as a last resort."

Jessamine laughed. "Oh, I love the country," she said. "I am really happy when I can go on a visit to uncle Ely. I love the fields and woods, the beautiful sunsets, the little lake, and the brook with its pools and shady nooks, and the banks all blossoming with violets. I believe I love the little wild flowers I get in the woods and fields better than the great, rich hot-house flowers we buy in the city. That old haunted house and the grounds about it are charming, and the air of mystery and sorrow that hangs over it makes it irresistible. What a night that was! How the moon shone and lighted up everything. Didn't the old place look grand and solemn? I can see it now."

Cecil could not repress a little shiver as she recalled the events of that night. "I think you appreciated the beauty of it more than I did," she replied.

Jessamine had never told anyone the story which Ernest Grayland had told to her, of the little lost heiress of the haunted house; of her being alive and of the search which was to be made for her. She felt that it would be better left untold unless he was successful, and when the lost was found it would be time enough for the world to hear of it.

She knew that if it became known that he was searching for a lost heiress he would be beset with impostors of all kinds who would come forward to claim the inheritance, so she wisely said nothing.

She had informed her father and aunt that she had met young Mr. Grayland and made his acquaintance at a house in Greendell where she was calling with some friends, and that explanation being satisfactory in every respect, the way was now open for Ernest to call upon her occasionally, which he was quick to make the most of. He grew more and more interested in the beautiful girl every time he saw her. He told her that he had communicated with his father who was still abroad, and informed him of the wonderful revelation in regard to little Evangeline being still living and his father had instructed him to go ahead with the search and spare neither time or money in his efforts to find her. "So I shall soon be ready to devote my whole time to it," he said, "and let us hope to be successful."

He had called once since Cecil had been staying with Jessamine and taken them for a drive in the park, making himself so agreeable that Cecil was charmed with him, and began to wonder if it might not be possible for her to win his love and so promote her chances for that life of wealth and luxury and power which she so much desired. "But then," she said to herself, "such men generally marry in their own class; so I might as well give up all thoughts of that." But nevertheless she

put on her very best manner and wore her prettiest dresses whenever there was a prospect of meeting him, and she took particular pains to lead him to think that she was very good and very much of a Christian. She talked about missionary work and tried to impress him with a sense of her great interest in all charitable works.

She had made the acquaintance of Mrs. Trotter, who was an intimate friend of Jessamine's aunt Anna, and found her a very congenial spirit. Mrs. Trotter was always doing slum work, and she took Cecil under her care and introduced her to the slums and their inhabitants, greatly to Cecil's delight. She saw people living under conditions that she never would have believed possible.

Jessamine had privately informed Mrs. Trotter that Cecil was not rich, and that she should therefore not encourage her in too lavish giving, but that advice was wholly unnecessary for Cecil went into the slums to see the sights, not to relieve the suffering. She told Jessamine that she saw very few among all that they visited who seemed worthy of help. "They are so dirty and many of them seem so vulgar and even vicious." She added, "I shall never help anyone who is so coarse and low."

Mrs. Trotter told Jessamine afterward that there was no danger that Cecil would bankrupt herself for she had given away only fifteen cents during the whole day's trip. Five cents to a little rag-a-muffin for standing for a snap shot from Cecil's kodak, five cents to a boy for carrying her hand

satchel for about an hour and five cents to an old woman for getting her a drink of water. "I don't think the slums will ever be revolutionized through any effort on her part," she said, laughing, "for I notice that she gets the worth of her money whenever she gives up any of it."

"How I wish I could get you interested in slum work," said Cecil to Jessamine. "The poor people whom I gave anything to seemed so glad to get it. I suppose they don't have enough to eat half of the time."

"I'm afraid I don't take as much interest in them as I ought to," said Jessamine, carelessly. "There are so many imposters one is very apt to be deceived by tales of woe which are manufactured for the occasion, and the money indiscriminately given, finds its way to the rum shop."

One evening when Jessamine's father and aunt were both away, and not expected home until midnight or after, there came a ring at the door. The two girls were alone in the drawing-room. Without waiting for the servant to open the door, Jessamine sprang up, intercepted the man and, sending him away, opened the door herself. Cecil was very curious to know who the caller could be whom Jessamine would hasten to meet at the door, but although she strained her ears to hear, she could only catch the faint sound of voices in the hall. Then a door shut on the other side and Jessamine came back into the drawing room and begged Cecil to excuse her for an hour as she had a call to make which was urgent. After she had

left the room Cecil arose and, crossing the hall, tried the door of the reception room and found it locked. She went back and took up a position where she could see when the door should open. After waiting for perhaps fifteen minutes Jessamine came swiftly down the stairs, and going to the reception room door, opened it and spoke softly to someone within. From her hiding place Cecil could not get a close view, but she saw that Jessamine was dressed more plainly than she had ever seen her. As she watched, the reception room door opened wider and a man came out, and after saying something in a low tone, they left the house together. Cecil gazed after them in amazement, then running to a front window she saw the two figures passing down the street. It was growing dusk and the street lights were beginning to flash up. A cab stood waiting a few steps down the street. She saw them enter it and disappear.

"Well, here is a mystery," said Cecil to herself. "Miss Jessamine Erlwin going out in the early evening with a strange man, and her father and aunt away and no one the wiser. I must watch my lady a little closer after this. I have always heard that these high-toned women had some secrets which they did not care to have known, but it seems to me Miss Jessamine is beginning rather young. I'll find out about this or my name isn't Cecil Lexington. It grows interesting."

It was nearly two hours before Jessamine returned, but though she apologized for her long absence from her guest, she offered no explanation as to where she had been or why she went.

About a week later when the two girls were again left alone, with the exception of the servants, Cecil, who was now on the alert for anything that might look suspicious, saw Jessamine go to a table, and pulling out a little drawer, take from it a transparent picture. Going to one of the front windows of the drawing-room she hung the transparency on the tassel of the window shade, and stood for a few moments looking down into the street. Then returning to her chair she resumed her conversation with Cecil as though nothing unusual was in her thoughts. A half hour passed and the bell rang and Jessamine hastened to the door as on the former occasion and again excused herself to Cecil as before. Again Cecil saw her leave the house, dressed very plainly and closely veiled, accompanied by a man, while down the street was a waiting cab, into which they stepped and were driven away.

Cecil never left her post, but watched with the intensity with which a cat waits for a mouse, and was at last rewarded by seeing the two figures coming along the street; saw them pause at the foot of the entrance steps and the man lift his cap and walk swiftly away as Jessamine ran up the steps and rang for admittance. Cecil stepped into the hall as the servant opened the door, hoping that Jessamine would give some explanation as to where she had been, but she did not, nor did she allude to it in any way after she had changed her dress and joined Cecil in the drawing-room.

It was all very mysterious and tantalizing and Cecil began to feel that she could never be happy unless she could find out all about it. She dared not question Jessamine, for there was always a dignity about the girl that held people in check when inclined to be either familiar or inquisitive, and Cecil wished to keep on the very warmest terms with her friend, for in that direction lay all her hopes of seeing glimpses of the high life which she so craved. If she should do anything to offend Jessamine Erlwin, she might vegetate in that old farmhouse in Greendell until she died of old age, and never get another opportunity to enjoy the delights she had enjoyed since her visit began in her friend's magnificent home. The thought of going back to the farm at all was growing unbearable to her. If there was only some way to win a place in such a home as this. If she could ever hope to live like this every day, she felt that she would be willing to barter her very soul; give twenty years of her life for such luxuries.

Jessamine was all unconscious of the tempest of discontent and envy that was raging in her companion's heart. She had grown up amid such surroundings and therefore their familiarity made them common to her. She had not thought of the matter at all. She sat chatting with Cecil and there was an expression of such satisfaction and happiness on her beautiful face that Cecil noticed it and wondered at it.

"She looked like that the other time she came home after her mysterious evening outing," thought

Cecil. "I should think she would look confused and rather guilty if she is up to any improper pranks. I wish I could find out where she goes."

One day Mrs. Trotter came in all breathless with excitement. "I have something new for you now, my dears, in the way of entertainment," she said laughing. "You never can guess what it is."

"Of course we can't," cried Jessamine. "You will have to tell us, dear Mrs. Trotter."

"Well, then, it is this: Some of the ladies of our church are going down among the houses of ill-repute and try to induce the women who run those houses to reform, and lead better lives. Of course, we are going to appoint a certain day to meet and go in a company, for we would not think of going to one of those places in twos and threes. There will be about twenty of us and I know it will not interest Jessamine particularly, but I thought Miss Lexington is enough interested in mission work so that she might be willing to join our little band. This will be a little out of the ordinary."

"How perfectly grand of you," said Jessamine's aunt. "How noble and good and self-sacrificing. I'm sure that is real Christianity. Those awful women ought to go down on their bended knees to you all for taking an interest in them to that extent, that you will go into their houses to speak to them. They ought to be very grateful, I'm sure."

"Do you want to be one of our little band?" asked Mrs. Trotter of Cecil.

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Cecil. She had been quick to notice that Jessamine's aunt approved of it, and answered accordingly.

"Would you like to go with us?" Mrs. Trotter next asked that lady.

"Oh, I have so many engagements," she replied, "and then you know it is not my own church that is doing it. I'm sure I wish you all the success you so richly deserve, but I don't believe I had better attempt it. I seldom attempt anything so strenuous as that. My nerves would hardly bear it, but I am very much interested, believe me, my dear. I shall be so anxious to hear what success you have. I think it is perfectly angelic in you all to take so much interest in such wretches, and all for their own good."

Mrs. Trotter turned to Jessamine. "I suppose it is useless to try to interest you in this work. You know, my dear, that I could never induce you to even go slumming."

Jessamine's face wore a peculiar expression. "I do not look upon such women as most people do," she said earnestly. "I think that nine-tenths of them have been driven into the lives they lead through the cold, steely glances and scornful treatment which they have received from their own sex. The very women who belong to the church, and profess so much virtue and perfection, that when a woman or girl takes her first downward step, they freeze her with their manner, and spread her story over their teacups, in the everyday gossip and scandal. When everyone has heard of her

misfortune, she knows by the averted eyes, the chilling hauteur, and icy manner of these immaculate ones that everyone knows her disgrace and despises her for it. It makes her reckless and causes her to forsake all the places where she is liable to meet these good (?) people, and she flies to the companionship of those who have been through a like experience, and have sunk still lower, and in their haunts of vice she prefers to stay, rather than to brave the coldness and scorn that will meet her everywhere among her former associates.

"Perhaps she was not naturally bad, and a few kind words, and friendly smiles would have saved her and helped her to gain a footing again on a higher plane; but they are not given, and she sinks lower and lower, until all her life and soul become embittered. It is not as Christ would have dealt with her, and yet the very people who pushed her on the downward path, claim to be Christians. What a mockery. What is a Christian? A Christian should be a follower of Christ's example. What would Christ have done? Spoken to her kindly and gently, raised her up and bade her 'go and sin no more.'"

Mrs. Trotter gasped. Jessamine's aunt looked exceedingly annoyed.

"But, my dear child," said Mrs. Trotter, "if you had a friend who did something disgraceful, would you not cut her acquaintance?"

"If a friend of mine took a downward step, and I knew it, I would treat her with the greatest care and friendliness, until I helped her up again,

and if her fall was known to no other woman than myself, I would keep her secret for her, through life and death. I would never give up a friend until she showed beyond a doubt that she was naturally vile and adopted vicious ways and vile companions, of her own free will. I know there are such, and that there is no way of helping them to any better way, but I believe them to be the exception rather than the rule."

"Mrs. Trotter," said Jessamine's aunt, "I hope you will not mind what Jessamine says. She is like her mother. My dear sister-in-law always contended that people who do wrong are misguided. That there may be some excuse for what they do. That when they do wrong it may be the result of a difference of opinion as to what is wrong. She argued that persons not all being created alike, could not see things alike, and that what was considered wrong by one might be looked upon as right by another, and therefore, no one had any right to judge his or her fellow-creature. But of course, we know that the church is perfectly competent to judge, and what it says we have to go by."

"Mrs. Trotter," said Jessamine, earnestly, "I want you to answer a question, truthfully, and without prejudice. If you were to meet with an accident, which rendered you helpless, and there was no one near to do anything for you, but one of these unfortunate women, do you not think you would receive as kind and humane treatment at her

hands as you would from any stranger who belongs to our own class?"

"I think very likely I might," answered Mrs. Trotter, smiling.

"Then if there are warm hearts among both classes, wherein lies the great difference in the soul? I know you will say that the stamp of vice is on these fallen women. Do you think that all the women who pose as respectable, and are received with open arms by society, are as chaste as they would lead one to believe? What do we know, positively, about the private life of any man or woman whom we meet in our own class? Every little while some scandal comes out about some couple who are prominent in society, or the church. Then, if they live such lives, are they any better than the outcast? The woman, for instance, who meets her lover by intrigue, and all unsuspected, perhaps, by her husband or family. I claim that we never are sure of the character of people whom we entertain right in our own homes."

"Well, there is some truth in that, I'll admit," replied Mrs. Trotter. "Will you go with us, Miss Lexington?"

"With pleasure," replied Cecil.

It was arranged that they should go the next day, early in the afternoon.

"We did not tell our pastor anything about it," said Mrs. Trotter, "and the married women will not tell their husbands until after we see what success we have."

"I think they will be sorry they went," said Jes-

samine, after Mrs. Trotter had gone. "They knew better than to mention it to their pastor, for he is a very sensible man, and he would have told them very quickly that if they wanted to accomplish anything with those kind of women, they would have to go about it in a very different way than this. I do not believe the majority of them have half so much of a desire to benefit those women's souls, as they have to gratify their own idle curiosity, in visiting those places, and if they don't meet with some insolence, and even insults, I shall be surprised."

"But, Jessamine, it is a great condescension, for pure, high-minded church-women, to bring themselves to enter such foul places of iniquity," said her aunt. "Those awful women ought to feel humble, and thankful, for the interest displayed in trying to lift them up."

"That is just where they will make their mistake," said Jessamine. "There will be sure to be some among the twenty, who will wear an air of queenly condescension, or else carry themselves as though they feared contamination by contact with them, while trying to benefit them through a lofty sense of duty, and that very thing will arouse all the bitterness and resentment their hearts can feel, and they will retaliate in a way that will surprise and horrify Mrs. Trotter and her little band, or I am no fair judge of human nature. How would we feel to have someone come into our home, and introduce the object of their visit as a desire on their part to lift us out of the mire, in

which, according to their opinion, we were wallowing, and try to bring us at least a few degrees higher? I am sure we would resent it, and you know, 'One touch of Nature,' etc."

"Well, I hope the ladies will return safely."

"Give yourself no uneasiness on that score," replied Jessamine. "No one will molest them when there are twenty of them."

CHAPTER XVI.

The party of ladies, which, with Cecil, numbered twenty-one, departed on their mission, the next afternoon, in hopeful spirits. They returned about dark, with angry and crest-fallen faces. Jessamine who was waiting with a good deal of curiosity to hear the report, saw Mrs. Trotter and Cecil as they came up the steps. She hastened to the door to admit them, for a fine mist was falling, and as they came in, she noticed the expression on their faces. When they were divested of their hats and umbrellas, and were comfortably seated in the drawing-room, she ventured to ask them as to the success of the expedition. Jessamine's aunt entered just at this point, and put the same question.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Trotter, "of all the brazen, hardened wretches I ever encountered in my life, I will say that today's experience has proved the worst. We were mocked and insulted at every turn, weren't we, Miss Lexington?" turning to Cecil.

"We certainly were," admitted Cecil.

"And as for reforming those creatures, one might as well try to reform a wild beast," continued

Mrs Trotter. "One woman asked us how much we would pay her annually toward her support, if she would set up a respectable establishment. We told her she ought to make her living by honest work. 'How?' she asked. 'By honest work,' we replied. 'Is there one of you who would give me or one of the girls in my house, a position as servant in your household?' she asked next.

"We hardly knew what answer to make to that, but at last one of our party spoke. 'You could hardly expect us to trust you that far,' she said. 'How would we know that you were sincere in your reform?' 'How would you expect us to prove our sincerity without a trial? And how would you expect we could live while we were proving it, unless we had employment of some kind?' were her next questions. 'You could go to work in some shop or store. We would all go and use our influence to procure you a place,' our spokesman said. 'The stores and shops are overcrowded, already, and at starvation wages,' the woman replied. 'I am afraid if that is all you can do for us we shall be forced to decline your generous offer, with thanks,' she said, with the most diabolical grin I ever saw. 'Then we can't persuade you to live decently?' our speaker asked. 'We live quite decently, now,' she said, impudently. 'Look here.' She opened a double doorway and showed us a glimpse of an elegant room, beautifully furnished, and asked us if we did not consider that pretty decent. We were so disgusted that we did not try to do anything more with her. We could see that

she had no idea of the meaning of the word decent.

"We went to other houses and met with all sorts of insolence. One woman asked us if 'the gospel joints were getting hard-up for new fields to work in, that we should come there to kill time?' One of the brazen wretches asked us, with mock politeness, if we wouldn't stay all night, and be introduced to their set, and one old, painted hag offered to bet that she 'had as much money as any one of us had.' 'Then,' said our spokeswoman, 'if that is the case, what is to hinder you from reforming, and becoming a Christian?' 'I'm afraid if I did you'd want me to give all my money to the church,' she replied, chuckling.

"But the worst insult to us, and our families, that we met with anywhere, was given to us by a woman called Fanchette Dumond. We went to her house and were admitted by a young woman, and in a few minutes this Dumond woman came sailing into the room, with the air of an empress, and asked us to what she 'owed the honor of our visit.' One of our party replied that 'we had come in the name of Christianity, to see if we could not prevail upon her, and others of her class, to give up their vile associates, live better lives and keep better company.' She drew herself up with the air of an insulted princess, and sweeping our little party with a scornful glance, she said: 'I do not understand what you mean by "better" company. We have just as good company as you do. In fact, we have the very same company that you do. We have your husbands, brothers, fathers, sons, and

lovers for our company. Do you consider them vile? If you do, then I should advise you to cut their acquaintance.'"

"Well, I thought some of the ladies would faint then," continued Mrs. Trotter. "I never saw such a disheartened set in my life. Of course, as I am a widow, and have no sons, or brothers, or father, what she had said did not strike me so hard, but some of them seemed hardly able to walk to the door. We didn't go to any more of them; we felt that we couldn't stand any more. So we disbanded at the end of that street and came home. I don't believe we shall ever make an effort of that kind, again. Those women are beyond all aid."

"Oh, how you must have suffered," said Jessamine's Aunt Anna. "I know how hard it must have been to endure the sight of those places, even under the most amicable circumstances, and then to be insulted like that was most dreadful."

Jessamine had been sitting like a statue ever since the mention of that name—Fanchette Dumond. Her face was a study. Her color came and went and intense excitement took possession of her. Mrs. Trotter was too much absorbed in her recital to notice anything unusual in Jessamine's looks or manner, and Aunt Anna had been too much interested to notice it, but Cecil saw and wondered, and grew suspicious as she watched her, and at last her suspicions were confirmed by hearing Jessamine ask in a voice which she vainly strove to steady to its natural tone: "What did you say that last woman's name was?" The re-

ply when it came almost took away the last remnant of Jessamine's self-possession.

"Her name is Fanchette Dumond. She is commonly called Fanny Dumond."

The conversation went on but Jessamine heeded it not. Nor did she know that Cecil's eyes were fixed upon her, watching every breath she drew. That name echoed in her ears and rendered her unconscious to what was said or done during dinner and up to the time that Mrs. Trotter took her departure. After she had gone Aunt Anna retired to her room with a headache and orders not to be disturbed, and Jessamine's father departed to spend the evening at his club. The two girls were alone and Cecil kept a close watch of Jessamine, noting her pre-occupied manner and earnest, thoughtful expression. She turned suddenly to Cecil and asked abruptly:

"When did Mr. Grayland say he would be back in the city?"

"He said he expected to be away about five weeks, but that it would depend on the state of the business on which he went."

"And how long is it since he was here?" asked Jessamine.

"A week ago today," replied Cecil.

"Four whole weeks if not more," murmured Jessamine, with an expression of keen disappointment on her face. She was silent and thoughtful for a few minutes, then going to the table drawer, she took from it the transparency and hung it in the front window. A few minutes later the bell rang,

and she hastened to the door. She returned in a moment and expressed regret at being called away but declared that the most imperative business required her immediate attention.

Cecil gracefully excused her, saying that as she was weary she would like to retire early and get a good, long night's rest. She went upstairs with Jessamine and while Jessamine was in her room arraying herself for the street, she crept downstairs and hid behind some draperies. She was soon rewarded by seeing Jessamine, closely veiled, descend the stairs and go straight to the reception room. Opening the door she spoke in low tones to someone within; but low as her tones were Cecil—straining every nerve to catch the words—heard her mention the name of the street in which they had their unpleasant experience that day, but she could not catch the rest of the low spoken words. Then the door opened and closed and she hurried to the window and saw them going down the street.

"She dropped into a chair trembling with excitement. A multitude of suspicions chased each other through her mind. Could it be possible that Jessamine Erlwin, the proud, refined daughter of the rich and influential Mr. Erlwin could be engaged in a low intrigue that took her to a quarter of the city which she would be unwilling to have known by her father and aunt, not to mention her friends, and the friends of the family? It looked like it certainly. Oh, what would she not give if she could only know? But how could she

find out? She dared not go to Jessamine's aunt; neither would she dare approach her father on so delicate a subject.

While she was pondering on these weighty problems the bell rang again, and the servant supposing that both young ladies were in the drawing-room, announced "Mr. Grayland." Cecil sprang up as though shot, and advanced to meet him. He asked if Miss Erlwin was at home, and Cecil, with downcast eyes, replied that she was out but that she might be in soon. He noticed the agitation in her manner and vaguely wondered at it.

"My business did not detain me long, you see," he said. "I returned this morning. I hoped to find Miss Erlwin in this evening."

Cecil was thinking rapidly. Here was a chance to kill any growing interest this man might have in regard to Jessamine. If he did not love Jessamine might she—Cecil—not stand some chance of winning him? Oh, if she only could. He was handsome, lovable and came of a highly-respected family. But best of all, he was rich, and if she could win him for a husband, she would never need to spend her life in that hateful old farmhouse, buried alive in a place like Greendell. It was worth any effort, but she must be careful—very careful. If she did not succeed in winning him she must still keep her hold on Jessamine, for that would be the only open door for an opportunity to catch occasional glimpses of the grand life and luxuries which she so craved. She decided it was worth some risk.

She allowed her agitation to increase, and her companion, who had addressed a remark to her which she did not seem to hear, said: "Miss Lexington you seem troubled and anxious about something. You don't seem like yourself, tonight." Now was her chance.

"Oh, Mr. Grayland," she said in a low tone, and glancing around as though in fear of being overheard by other ears than his, "I am so worried about Jessamine. I am nearly frantic, and I don't know what to do. I am a guest in this house, and that makes my position all the more embarrassing. I wish I dare tell you all. I think you might know what to do, and yet—I don't wish to say anything to you that will cause you to think ill of anyone. Oh, I don't know what to do." Tears stood in her eyes.

He looked the surprise he felt, then quickly smothering it he said quietly: "Tell me anything. You need have no fear. I am not easily prejudiced and I will try and help you. You may trust me. I will never disclose anything which you may see fit to confide in me."

"Then I will tell you," she said impulsively, "for I do trust you, and I know you can help me. I am so anxious for Jessamine's safety. I fear she has gone into danger tonight, through some mistaken sense of duty or some mission of charity." She then related to him all she had witnessed in regard to the hanging of the transparency in the window; of the mysterious man who came as if in answer to it, and at last she told him the name

of the street which she had heard Jessamine mention, and asked him innocently if that was a good, respectable locality that would be safe for Jessamine to venture into in the evening.

He turned white to the lips when she mentioned the name of the street and she noted his agitation, but he—thinking that if Cecil did not know the character of that locality he should not enlighten her—made her an evasive reply and said that he would go down in that neighborhood and see if he could be of any assistance to her if she was on charitable work intent. He took a hasty leave of Cecil and left the Erlwin mansion.

A thousand fears and emotions possessed him. What could bring a girl like Jessamine into such a locality? He tried to think that Cecil had misunderstood the name of the street. He called a cab and drove directly to the street in question and telling the man to wait for him, even if it should be half the night, he went down into the center of the ill-favored thoroughfare.

When Jessamine and her companion halted before the door of Fanchette's lodgings, the man advanced and rang the bell, while Jessamine waited anxiously, her heart beating wildly. A young woman answered the ring, and the man asked if Fanny Dumond lived in that house. The girl replied in the affirmative.

"May we see her for a few moments?" he asked. "The lady who is with me would like to speak to her."

"If it is one of those precious ladies who were here

today, tell her I have no time for her, Nell," they heard a voice say from within, and the girl was about to shut the door in their faces, when Jessamine stepped forward with a little appealing gesture.

"Oh, no, no," she said, earnestly. "I want to see Miss Dumond, on very important business. Please tell her I want to see her about a little girl who lives with her—a girl named Evangeline."

Low as her voice had been, Fanchette heard her and with a cry and a bound she was at the door.

"Eva!" she gasped, "have you come with word from Eva? Come in, come in quickly." She almost dragged Jessamine and her companion into the house, and closed the door. Showing them into a bright, pleasant room, she placed chairs for them, and with glowing eyes and flushed face, stood waiting impatiently for them to speak.

"Do you know where my Eva is?" she said at length, in a trembling voice. Jessamine's heart sank heavily.

"We came to you to find Evangeline," she said. "We want to know as much about her as you can tell us. I have come here tonight to find her, and establish her identity beyond a doubt. I have been told that you have had the care of her ever since her infancy, and that you can give all the information that is required, to satisfy her people—her relatives."

"Then you don't know where she is at present?" said Fanchette, in a disappointed tone, "or is it that you know and won't tell me?" suspiciously.

"We do not know. I wish we did," sighed Jessamine. "I supposed she was here with you."

Fanchette looked a little pacified. "Then what can I do to help you?" she said, slowly. "I don't know where she is."

"You can tell us all you know of her. You can supply the missing links in the chain of her life, from the time she was stolen, until now," replied Jessamine.

"Stolen!" cried Fanchette, "I never knew she was stolen. Did you think I stole her?"

"No, no," said Jessamine, "we know that you did not. I will tell you the part you do not know, which embraces the time in her life, before she came to you as she did. Then you may tell me the rest if you will."

She proceeded to tell Fanchette of the Gypsy girl's crime, and of her shifting the child upon Nat Harnley, in order to rid herself of it, without further bloodshed. Of his plight, when he found out what she had done, and how he dared not return and confess his part in it, for fear of the consequences. But there was one fact which Jessamine was very careful not to disclose, and that was the name and great wealth and standing of Eva's family, for she knew that women of Fanchette's class were very greedy for wealth and luxury, and she did not wish her to know—at least, now—what great wealth would be Eva's, if she could be found.

As Fanchette listened, with wide open eyes, to the recital of the events referred to, she was becoming swiftly disarmed toward Jessamine. Something in the girl's quiet and unaffected manner and

gentle way, was overcoming her natural resentment towards her for the difference in their social relations. She could see at a glance that Jessamine was a lady, born and bred, but there was no air of affected superiority; no condescension shown in her manner toward Fanchette. There was no shrinking from her, as though she was afraid of contamination, and by the time Jessamine had finished her story, Fanchette felt a great wave of good-will toward her, taking the place of all suspicion. She liked her, and concluded to tell her all she knew in regard to Eva.

The man who had accompanied Jessamine, said he would go into the hall, if there was anything which they did not wish him to hear, and Fanchette replied that she would a little rather say some things to the lady, alone, so he took up his position just outside the door of the room to wait until the interview was over.

After he had closed the door, Fanchette began her story. She told all that we already know, of how Eva had been placed in her care. "I loved her too well to part with her after she had been with me a short time, and I tried at first to work and earn enough for us both. I could not get much to do, burdened as I was with that baby, and at last there came a time when there was no money, and nothing to eat in the house."

"I was feeling desperate, and at that very time a man came to see me, whom I had known for years. He proposed that I live with him, and let him provide for us. 'I don't want to marry you,

Fan,' he said, 'for I am not a marrying man, and I think you have had a rather hard time of it, so far as married life goes. You are not anxious to try it again, are you?' I said that I was not. "Then live with me, and I will see that you and the kid don't go hungry.' I suppose you will be shocked, when I tell you I consented. We had to move out of the house we were then in, because the owner found out, in some way, that we were not married, and informed us that only respectable tenants need expect to occupy that place. We moved into this street, and here there are no questions asked.

"After a time this man was obliged to leave town in a hurry, and after that I had other lovers, for I could get no work after living as I had done. No one would give employment to a woman who had lived in this street, if they knew it. But through it all I have guarded Eva from a knowledge of anything vile, until a few weeks ago a man appeared who had money enough to do the handsome thing by her for a time at least, and he was crazy after her, but she did not fancy him, and she ran away and left us, saying in a note she left for me that she should return to me sometime when she was sure he had gone.

"When you came tonight I thought it was with news from her. I love Eva. She is my one idol, and if she would only come back, she might do just as she pleased in everything. I suppose you think that such women as I am can not love; that we are all bad and vile, but you are not to be

blamed if you do, for you are taught it from the cradle by your pious Christian mothers. But we are human in spite of all that prejudice and spite can say against us," concluded Fanchette with a little defiant toss of the head.

"My mother never taught me any such thing," replied Jessamine gently. "Mamma always said we would find human nature much the same in all classes. A mixture of good and evil. She always told me not to condemn anyone, for we do not know what their temptation might have been; what circumstances conspired to drive them into certain conditions, but most important of all, that we do not know how it looked to them. I have been about a good deal and I find warm hearts among those who are called social outcasts, and I know that women who have been unfortunate are more inclined to charity toward members of their own sex than the more fortunate ones.

"I know that some women who have lost their virtue, are warmer hearted and have quicker sympathies and kindlier impulses than some of their immaculate sisters who hold their skirts aside and turn away their faces. And there is another thing to take into consideration," continued Jessamine, turning and laying her hand on the arm of Fanchette's chair. "There is not one doubt in my mind that some women, who pose as perfectly virtuous in high society, are guilty of intrigues with their lovers just as much as the social outcast, only they are so sly and careful that they do not often get found out. Why, then, should we

judge one class so heavily when we do not, can not know what we are entertaning right in our own set; in our own homes? I am very much relieved to find that you have reared Evangeline in innocence of all vice. You deserve great credit for protecting her childhood from all harm. And now I must go for it is getting late. If you hear anything of Evangeline's whereabouts, please let me know at this address." She gave her the address of the man who was waiting for her just outside in the hall.

"I surely will, Miss," replied Fanchette. "Just wait a moment and I will show you the little things that Eva wore when she came to me."

She brought out a box and, opening it, took out a dainty little white dress, trimmed with fine lace, a little ring and pin also, and handed them to Jessamine for inspection.

"I was strongly tempted to pawn or sell the ring and pin more than once," she said, "but I could not bear to on her account. I thought they might be needed some day to help prove who she was, and now you see the time has come."

Jessamine examined them closely and became convinced that the pearls and diamonds, although very small, were real. She handed them back to Fanchette who looked relieved for she feared that Jessamine was going to ask to keep them.

"You will guard them as carefully as you have here-to-fore won't you?" she said. "When Evangeline is found they will be wanted as proof. I thank you very much, Miss Dumond, for giving me

all this information and you will surely hear from me again. Would you like to leave the kind of life you are living and be free?"

"Oh, so much!" cried Fanchette. "You don't know how hateful and loathsome it is, and how tired I am of it all. How I wish I could go out in the quiet country and be as free as the birds."

"Then you shall have a chance to give up this life and lead a bet— happier one," said Jessamine. "I promise it. And now good night but not good bye." She turned to Fanchette with a charming smile and bow and moved toward the door.

Fanchette followed her, a wistful look in her eyes. "You wouldn't like to shake hands with me, would you?" She half whispered.

Jessamine turned promptly and placed her hand in Fanchette's with a warmth of feeling that brought tears to the unfortunate woman's eyes.

"Bless you for that," said Fanchette. "Good night."

Ernest walked along, looking at the houses as he passed, but when he had reached the end of the street he had seen no sign of the object of his search. He paused and looked about. A cab was standing as though waiting for some one. He began to retrace his steps, calling himself a fool for his pains, when the door of one of the houses opened and two figures came out, a man and a girl very plainly dressed. His heart gave a great bound and then seemed to stop. He stepped into the shadow of a doorway where, concealed from their view, he watched them approach. They pass-

ed quite close to him, and he had to admit that there was something very familiar about the girl's figure. He followed at a distance and saw them enter the waiting cab, then hastening to his own, he jumped in and ordered the man to catch up with and keep the other one in sight.

They drove swiftly on for some time. An age it seemed to him, but at last his own cab stopped and he saw that the other had drawn up to the curb a little further on. Hoping against hope, he sprang out, paid and dismissed his man and walking leisurely along, kept the two figures—which had alighted from their cab—in sight. He followed them for some distance, then they paused, the man lifted his cap to the girl and walked swiftly away, while she turned and ran up the steps to the Erlwin mansion, removing her veil as she did so, and when the light in the entrance fell full upon her he recognized without a possiblity of error, Jessamine Erlwin. He had been hoping that it would prove to be someone else after all, but there was no mistake, he had seen her quite plainly.

With a multitude of conflicting emotions he turned about and went home. Sleep was out of the question. He was conscious of a heavy, despondent heartache, which kept him awake. He arose at last and called himself to an account for it. No woman he had ever known had ever done anything he could remember that had caused him such unhappiness. "Why should I care so much?" he asked himself, but at first he could give no satisfactory answer. He tried to forget it; tried to

look upon it as only an incident which was of no consequence to him, but the more he tried to overcome his unhappiness the more it mastered him. The more he tried to assure himself that Jessamine Erlwin's doings were of no consequence to him, the more convinced he became that they were. A vision of a white-robed, rose-crowned figure descending a staircase, illumined by a red glow, rose before him, and he lived over again, in fancy, the night he spent in the haunted house. One by one he reviewed the interviews he had since had with Jessamine, and the beautiful high-bred face with its smiling brown eyes floated before him and he found himself powerless to shut out the vision.

"Is it possible I have fallen in love with the girl?" he asked himself, and as a test he tried to imagine how life and the world would seem, and the future look to him if he should hear that she was dead and he could never see her face or hear her voice again, and such a wave of loneliness swept over him as he had never felt before.

"There is but one way," he said at last. "I can never be happy without her, that is sure, and it is very doubtful if I can be happy with her if her feet have already begun to tread the downward road. I wonder if a whole-hearted affection would not turn her into the right path? Could I ever trust her? Perhaps she does not care for me. Oh, Jessamine, if you were only mine, I believe I could make you love me and be true."

He reasoned that as she was young, and the young are easily influenced for good or evil, the

chances were that a marriage of love would save her from further wrong, if anything would, but could he overlook the discovery he had made that night? Could he bury it so deep that it would never rise in the future to make him wretched? He fought a great battle that night, a battle between self-appreciation and unselfish love, for Ernest Grayland had lived a moral life, and his grand nature abhored vice in any form, but love won the victory, and he felt much happier when the decision was reached, and that was that he would ask Jessamine Erlwin to be his wife, and try, by an unselfish devotion to win her back to a virtuous life.

He went to the Erlwin mansion the next day, and was shown into the drawing-room. Jessamine was alone, Cecil having gone on a shopping expedition with Jessamine's aunt. As he entered she arose to meet him with a glad cry. He noticed that she looked wonderfully happy, her sweet face was radiant, and she gave him her hand and was about to speak, when he, not wishing to delay a moment the all-important question now that they were alone, said quietly:

"Jessamine, will you marry me? I love you with all my heart. Will you be my wife?"

To say that the girl was astonished, would not express it. Unbounded amazement was written upon her countenance. She looked up at him and caught her breath sharply.

"Why, Mr. Grayland," she said, "are you in earnest?"

"Most certainly I am," he said smiling. "Ernest

by name, and earnest by nature. Did you think I would use such a subject for a jest? I want you for my own. I think I have loved you ever since that night in the haunted house. May I hope to win your affection in return?"

She flushed rosy red, and dropped her lashes over her brown eyes. "I think it must be fate," she said with a little laugh, "for I have been growing to care for you ever since the night I met you in the dear old haunted house. Perhaps Cupid is one of the spirits who haunted the place."

For the next few minutes it seemed to them that life had suddenly taken on a new and heavenly beauty. He took her in his arms and kissed her rapturously. All his misery of the past night was for the moment forgotten. After the first transports of joy were over, Jessamine said:

"I have such grand news for you, dearest. You will be so pleased. I have found Fanny Dumond!"

"Is it possible!" he exclaimed. "How and where?"

"Oh, some ladies who were in here yesterday were discussing some of the places in the city which they thought were in need of a little missionary work, and they mentioned that in —— street lived a woman by the name of Fanny Dumond. I nearly jumped out of my chair when they spoke that name. I just pricked up my ears but said nothing to them. When they were gone I put a signal in the window of the drawing-room to call up a little Salvation Army man who goes with me whenever I want to go into the poverty-stricken dis-

trict, and when he came, I told him I was not going to visit the poor this time, but that I wanted to find a certain woman, who lived in —— street. He asked me if I knew what kind of a name that locality had, and I told him I did, but that this was a very important matter, and must be attended to, and that no one must know of it. So he went with me. I am not afraid to go almost anywhere with him, and we found the woman, and she had your little cousin, Evangeline, in her care, until a few weeks ago, and now the girl has run away from her, and she does not know where she is."

Such a wave of relief and joy swept over Ernest when Jessamine disclosed the reason for her conduct of the previous night that it made him feel dizzy for a moment. But this was followed by a sensation of horror at the thought of his little cousin having lived amid such surroundings.

"In such a place as that!" he groaned, "and reared among such companions. I was afraid she might not fall into very good hands; but I did not think it would be so bad as this. It would have been better for her if the Gypsy had killed her in her innocent infancy."

"Oh, no, no," cried Jessamine. "You do not understand how it is. This woman declared to me that she had always shielded the child from all evil. She did not profess to be respectable herself, but she claimed that Eva, as she called her, was perfectly innocent. She stated that the child had lived with her until a few weeks ago; that she

took a violent dislike to a friend of hers who came often to the house, and that she left home, and that she did not know where she had gone. She found a note pinned on the door, saying she had left for a time, but that some time she intended to come back to her 'dear Fanchette.' She showed me the little dress, all trimmed with lace, which the baby wore when she was brought to her, and the little pin, set with pearls, and marked with the name 'Evangeline;' also a little ring which was on the baby's finger. She says she paid a professor to instruct the child in all the branches of a good school education. Oh, how I wanted to see you yesterday before I ventured to start for this woman's house, but you remember you told us you did not expect to be back for five weeks and I did not dare wait for you. So much can happen in five weeks, you know."

"A great deal can happen in a few hours," he said, drawing her to him and kissing the sweet face with an added tenderness. "I think I am the happiest man in this old world now."

"I knew this discovery would make you happy," said Jessamine. "I could hardly wait until I could get a chance to tell you."

"There are other things that make me happier than that," he replied, "and I think you are a very brave little girl."

"Oh, I don't know," she said, "the little Salvation Army man is a good protector if one wants to visit any place among the lower classes of the city. He goes into some awful places and some of

those people seem to have a real affection for him. You see if they are in trouble or want he helps them instead of preaching to them. He sympathizes with them and that is everything. You don't know how far a little sympathy goes with that class of people. He never preaches; he practices."

"If you go on praising this Salvation Army officer I shall get jealous presently," said Ernest, with a happy laugh.

"I'll hang the signal in the window some night when you are here, and when he comes I'll introduce you to him. You will like him, I know. He is a fine little fellow."

"Why don't you go slumming with women of your own class? I thought that going slumming was quite a fad now. That it was just the thing to do."

"Oh, I never go slumming for a fad. I wouldn't go down into the poverty stricken district and pry about and ask impertinent questions, and intrude where I wasn't wanted, as some of these fashionable women do, for anything. That would be no pleasure to me."

"How did you come to get acquainted with this man?"

"One day when I was out for a drive our carriage nearly killed a young girl who threw herself under the horses with the intention of committing suicide. I was frightened nearly to death. I was alone except for the coachman. A crowd gathered and the girl was taken to a hospital. This Salvation Army man was among those who seemed

most helpful. I went to the hospital and saw that all was done for the girl that was possible, and I asked this man to notify me in case she died, and to come to the house and report how she was getting along. He did so. The girl got better and I felt interested in the poor thing. It seemed she had been deserted by her lover and that was why she wanted to die, and after she was well enough to leave the hospital I went to see her and get her established in some comfortable rooms and the Salvation Army man helped me.

"Aunt Anna objected to the man's coming here, and finally absolutely refused to allow me to go out with him. She said he did not belong to our class and I must stop it. So I told him that when she and papa were not in, and I had time to go out, I would hang a transparent picture in the front window of the drawing-room, and when he saw that he would come and I would be watching for him and admit him myself. We have done that way for some time and Aunt Anna knows nothing about it. She would be very angry if she should find it out, so you will not betray my little secret, will you?"

"No, indeed; and I shall have to make the acquaintance of your Salvation man. Does he spend all his time as a good Samaritan?"

"He makes it his everyday work. He lives on the plainest food and gives away everything he can get to those who are needy and in distress. He merely allows himself the necessaries of life and sometimes hardly that in order to assist others.

He never reproaches them, never preaches to them; he justs helps them. Some of those poor people almost worship him."

"I see he has your championship," smiling, "and when he can have the sweetest little champion in the city, he is greatly to be envied. I shall have to speak to him about it. And now I am going to 'ask papa' for you at the first opportunity. I hope he will be in a gracious humor."

"I think you have nothing to fear. He is a great stickler on the subject of 'family,' and yours is certainly above reproach."

After more conversation which is interesting only to lovers, Ernest took his departure. As he laid his head on his pillow that night, feeling that he was the happiest man in the world, like a flash the old Gypsy woman's prophecy came back to him, as she had spoken it while she held his hand and looked into his palm that day at the Gypsy camp. "You will fall in love and the girl will be worthy of you, but you will be misled in your estimation of her, by a false friend. A female who will want you for herself, will misrepresent to you the character of the girl you love, and you will be extremely unhappy; but it will all come right through your own goodness of heart; where a more narrow and selfish man would fail, through your own nobility you will be brought to happiness."

CHAPTER XVII.

It was all settled. Jessamine's finger bore a beautiful diamond as a badge of her betrothal. Mr. Erlwin had pronounced himself well pleased that his daughter had chosen so wisely. He told Ernest that there had never been a family among all his extensive acquaintance that he could be more pleased for his daughter to marry into. "Of course, it was to be expected that a girl brought up as she has been, should choose a husband who came of a good family," he said. "My daughter would not make such a mistake as a mis-alliance."

Aunt Anna had pronounced herself well satisfied, and the path was smooth for the lovers' feet. Cecil was frightened at what she had done, but she felt somewhat relieved when Ernest assured her that he had never told Jessamine of what she had said to him, in regard to her mysterious errands.

"I was only anxious for the dear girl's safety," she said, "and I would not like her to think I was prying or meddling with her affairs; but you must know that when I heard her mention that street I was naturally alarmed for her own good."

"I have never told her anything about it," he replied a little coldly, "and I never shall; but I

have proved to my entire satisfaction that her errand was one of mercy and goodness."

The only point upon which Mr. Erlwin was firm was that the marriage should not take place until Jessamine was twenty-one. "I do not believe in young people marrying under that age," he said. "If you both love each other truly you will be faithful and wait. If your love should prove to be only a fancy, then it would have time to burn itself out," and they had to submit.

The next day after Jessamine's disclosures, Ernest paid a visit to Fanchette. She told him all she knew of Eva, and tears gathered in her eyes several times while she called up the past, and spoke of the days of Eva's infancy.

"I swear to you, sir," she said, earnestly, "the dear child is innocent as an angel. I never allowed her to hear anything low or vile, and we lived alone together. Since she went away I have taken in some of my neighbors, so now there are other women in my house besides myself; but they were never here till after she left. I could not bear that her ears should hear their vile language, or her beautiful eyes look upon some of the sights she would have seen had they been here with her. I brought her up to think as I do, that marriage is about the worst condition in life, but I thought when she reached womanhood she might choose a lover and live with him until she tired of him, and if there was no marriage bond to fetter her she could leave him whenever she liked if he failed to please her.

"A few weeks ago a suitor appeared, and tried his best to win her, but she took a violent dislike to him, and because I would not forbid him the house, she left me, saying in a note which she left that she loved me and should return to me sometime when she was sure he was gone. I suspected that a young lad named Dick Delmorn who lived in rooms near ours knew where she had gone, for they were very great friends, but I have never been able to find out anything from him. He never has given me a hint of her whereabouts, and now he is gone too, and I suspect he has gone to her, for her kitten has mysteriously disappeared, and I have cared for it tenderly ever since she went away. It seemed all that was left to me of her, for she loved it and used to go to sleep every night with it clasped in her arms."

Fanchette stopped and wiped the tears from her eyes.

"Why," asked Ernest gently, "did you not get some honest employment, and give up this kind of life, for her sake as well as your own?"

"I couldn't earn enough to support us in as comfortable a style of living, at any work which I could get. I found that this way of living was easiest, and provided us with more comforts than we could get in any other way. I never chose this way for any other reason. The men who have supported me in this way have treated me far better, and with more consideration and kindness than my husbands ever did, for I was married three times before I took Eva to care for, and

my experiences in the matrimonial line were one round of slavery, drudgery and abuse; so this life is an improvement on the other, though I hate the degradation of it. I get weary of life; but it is the only door that is open to me now, and I hope that life will not be long."

Ernest did not think it wise to mention the name of the family to which Eva belonged. He thought it would be soon enough for Fanchette to know, if Eva was found, and if she should never be found, then the woman should be none the wiser as to her parentage. He thanked her for the information she had given him, and laying a twenty dollar bill upon the stand, took his departure, with her thanks ringing in his ears.

"If it is as she has said, that she brought the child up in innocence and purity, she shall be rewarded so handsomely that she will be able to leave this life of shame and degradation, which she claims to be so weary of, and live in comfort and peace for the rest of her life," he said to himself, "but the next step is to find Evangeline, and restore her to her rightful place in the world."

The night after this, when he was calling on his betrothed, she said: "I am going to hang the signal in the window, for auntie and papa and Cecil are out, and now will be a good time to introduce you to the Salvation Army man."

She took from the table drawer the transparency and hung it in the window. A few minutes passed, then there came a ring at the bell, and going to the door and dismissing the servant, she ushered

in a little, pleasant looking man, with mild blue eyes and a gentle manner. She presented him to Ernest, who greeted him warmly, saying that Miss Erlwin had said so much about his good works, that he had expressed a desire to meet him.

The little man shook his head. "Miss Erlwin speaks too highly of my poor efforts," he said. "She is the good angel among the sorrowing and destitute. Her's is the hand that has dealt out help of the most substantial kind to the poor and suffering ones. I have had the happiness of escorting her on her missions of mercy. I have the desire but not the means to relieve the hungry ones in our city. Miss Erlwin has denied herself many things which are usually prized by young ladies in order to spend the greater part of the allowance she receives from her father on the sick and destitute. If every wealthy one in this great city would give as much, and give it as wisely, there would not be many left in want."

"Oh!" cried Jessamine, "I have never given very much; not a hundredth part of what I would like to. But you should hear the people whom we have visited, bless this missionary, and see them almost bow down and worship him."

Ernest laughed. "I think you must be quite a pair when you go out together. I would like to put in a plea to accompany you on some of your expeditions. May I?"

"Certainly," they both answered in a breath. "We would be glad to have you, and," added Jessamine smiling, "don't forget, please, to take along your pocketbook."

The next day Cecil announced that she must return home. She would have liked to remain in this luxurious place forever, but she feared to overstep the bounds and wear out her welcome by prolonging her visit. She insisted that Jessamine should accompany her home, and that young lady consented, to her great relief, for she wished above all things to keep her hold on her, as a stepping-stone to a higher life. She had vowed to herself that she would try by every means at her command, to win a wealthy man for a husband, and she thought if she could visit at the Erlwin mansion every little while, she would have opportunities which she could not get elsewhere.

Jessamine was entirely unconscious of all this, and took it for granted that Cecil liked her for herself alone, and so it was decided that she should go home with Cecil.

Mrs. Bruler had gone to see her invalid aunt and Eva had been an inmate of Ely Nayburn's household for a week, when one afternoon while Cindy was out, there came a rap at the kitchen door, and upon opening it, Eva was rendered almost speechless with joy at the sight of Dick standing there with a covered basket on his arm.

"Dick!" she cried, as soon as she could get her breath. "Oh, Dick, Dick, is it really you? Oh, I am so glad to see you. When did you come, and how?" and seizing him with both hands, she drew him into the house.

A faint mew came from inside the basket. "What is that?" cried Eva. Dick calmly lifted the cover

and showed her her own kitten, curled up within. Eva was so excited she could hardly get the little creature out.

"How it has grown. Oh, Dick, I am so glad, so glad to see you." She took the kitten in her arms and began to cry.

"Well, well," said Dick, "that's a great way to be glad; to begin to cry. I say if you don't stop it I shall think you are sorry we came." But the expression on his face belied his words. "Are you living here? I thought I sent you to Joneses."

Eva told him all. When she related her experience with Eddie, Dick could keep silent no longer.

"I'm glad you licked him, Eva. If I'd been there I'd have given him worse than you did. He was a little kid when I was there; about six years old then, I should think. I saw him today when I went there to inquire for you, but he did not remember me and I didn't tell him who I am. He was out in the yard, and he said his mother was not at home. I asked about you and he said his mother had sent you away, and you were living with the Nayburns just now. So I came right here.

I've been three days on the road, for I walked from the city, and I slept in the fields. I got to the village last night but it was so late in the evening that I thought everybody was in bed, so I found a good place in a little house in the edge of the woods—an old sugar shanty, and kitty and I staid there last night and made ourselves very comfortable, and as long as things are just as they are, I guess we had better go back there for to-

night anyway. I don't know anybody but the Joneses and I won't go near them now, so I think the shanty will be all right till I can get a place to work for some of the folks in the village. Don't you?"

"Oh, but Dick, I'm afraid the shanty is not comfortable. I've still got some of that money you gave me. You had better take that and get a place to board. There is almost three dollars of it, and you can board almost anywhere in this little place for two dollars and a half a week."

"No, I won't take it. We may need it worse for something else, and I've got a little money with me; enough to buy me something to eat. I would rather go back to the shanty for a few days. You can come out there to see me, can't you? It is not more than half a mile from here on a straight road."

He drew her to the door and pointed out the way. "Do you see those woods over there? That's the place, just in the edge of those woods, a little way beyond the old haunted house. You have been there, I suppose, by this time?"

"No," she said, "not yet; but I am going to see it."

"When can you come out to the shanty?"

"I'll try to come tomorrow afternoon," she said. "But tell me about Fanchette; is she well and does she miss me?"

"She is well, but she cried a good deal at first. I pinned your note on her door and she came and asked me lots of questions. I think she suspected that I knew where you had gone, but I never let

on. After you had been gone three weeks she and some other women went into some kind of partnership, I guess, for they all live there together now, four of them. I had quite a time to get your kitten when I got ready to come, for Fanchette kept him very close and petted him, and I have seen her cry over him when she did not know I was looking. Poor old Tipsy died and then I made preparations to come. I saved enough money out of selling my papers so I did not take one cent from the old gent. I guess that Will Evers and Fanchette had a quarrel about you for I never saw him go there more than once after you left. I guess I had better go back now to the shanty. May I keep the kitten for a day or two just for something to talk to?"

"Of course you may, you dear old boy. How good you are. I'll come tomorrow if I possibly can. Hadn't I better tell Mr. and Mrs. Nayburn about you?"

"Not yet," he said. "I don't want anybody to know that I am living in the sugar shanty. I want to get a place to work before you tell them. Be sure and come tomorrow."

"But let me get you something to eat. Aren't you hungry?"

"No," he replied, "I have enough to last me two days yet, and if you will bring something tomorrow for the kitten that is enough. I have had something to feed him on today. I'll go now. Good bye."

"Good bye until tomorrow, Dick. I'll see you then."

He had just vanished from sight down the dusty road when Cindy returned.

"I'm tired to death," she said sinking into a chair. "I'm just sick. I went in to see Mrs. Smith and she's just gitten over the appen-di-ceetus, and she told me all about it and I do believe I'm goin' to have it, fer I feel just as she said she did."

"I hope you are not going to be ill," said Eva.

"I'm afraid I'm goin' to have it," said Cindy.

Ely came in at this moment and just in time to catch the last words. "Have what?" he asked.

"The appen-di-ceetus," said Cindy.

"I shouldn't wonder," he replied. Then seeing Eva's look of surprise and alarm he continued, "but I wouldn't worry about it. Cindy has had every disease that human flesh is heir to—excepting two or three, and she's alive yet and able to eat her three meals a day, so there is no cause for immediate alarm."

"I guess I don't eat any more'n you do, Ely Nayburn," she said wrathfully.

"I did not say you did," he replied, "but you are remarkably hearty for anyone that has every new complaint that comes along. But if you are determined to have appendicitis you had better put it off for a week or so for I got a letter from Jessamine today and she is coming home with Cecil and writes that she will be here tomorrow night."

Cindy rose with alacrity. "Wal, then," she said, "her room must be put in order, and I must see to gittin' somethin' good baked up. Evy, can you see to puttin' Miss Erlwin's room in order?" Cindy always called Eva, "Evy."

Eva went about the appointed task and Cindy pronounced herself well satisfied when it was completed.

"Now shall I put some flowers in a vase and set it on the dressing table?" asked the young girl.

"What! pick the flowers off from the flower-bed an put 'em in the bedroom?" cried Cindy in horrified accents. "Wal, I guess not. I ain't goin' to have my flowers picked. I guess she can go out into the yard and look at 'em where they're growin' if she wants to see 'em."

Eva went about all the work which Cindy directed her to do, with a light and happy heart. The thought that Dick was so near was a source of great joy to her. Cindy wondered at the light which shone in the girl's eyes, and the smiles which came so readily to her sweet face. Tomorrow she would see Dick again. She would go to the village store and buy some articles of food which she knew he liked and put them in a basket and go out to the shanty and stay as long as Cindy could spare her. She would not say anything about it, for he had requested her not to, but she would ask Cindy if she might go out for a walk and how long she might be gone and when she returned she would tell her that she walked out to the woods. She could hardly wait

for the morrow so impatient was she to see "dear old Dick" again.

The next morning was a busy one, but at last all was in readiness for the expected guest, and after the noonday meal was over, and the dishes done, Eva asked Cindy if she might go out for a little walk. Cindy gave her consent, provided that she would promise to be back by half-past four.

So Eva started to make her anticipated visit. She went to the store and bought some things which she thought Dick would relish, and then taking the direction he had given her she walked along the road toward the woods.

If she had not been so preoccupied with the thoughts of Dick, she would have noticed the haunted house, for her way led directly past it, but she was so wrapped in her own thoughts, and as she neared the end of her journey, was watching so intently for a sight of Dick, that she passed by the entrance to the grounds without seeing it. Her eyes were fixed on the entrance to the woods, and soon she descried the outlines of the sugar shanty, and a few moments later, Dick, himself, appeared, and waved a joyous welcome to her. She found him very comfortable, considering his surroundings. The shanty made a shelter from wind and rain, and there was a place where he could make a fire if he so desired. The kitten, too, was making itself at home, and for the two hours that Eva staid in the place she enjoyed every moment.

"I wish I could stay here with you," she said.

"I wish you could," replied Dick, "it is almost like camping."

"Does anyone know you are here?" she asked.

"No, I have seen no one about here. I am going to see if I can get something to do on a farm. There is most always a chance to get something to do in the country, even if a boy don't earn more than his board and clothes, and I'd like to live in the country for a while just for a change. I'll let you know when I get a place, and you will come out here again in a day or two, won't you?"

"Indeed I will," she replied. "Oh, I am so glad you are here."

Fearing she would overstay her allotted time she bid Dick good bye, and started for home. The day which had been bright and warm, was becoming cloudy, and the wind was rising. It began to sigh through the trees before she left the shanty, and before she reached home it was blowing a gale. Great black clouds were rolling swiftly across the heavens, and dust was flying in clouds along the road as she turned into the yard, thankful to reach home.

CHAPTER XVIII.

While Eva had been enjoying herself at the shanty with Dick, something was happening at the house she had left, that was soon to change the whole course of her life. She had been gone about half an hour when Mrs. Jones called to see Cindy. They sat down to chat awhile, and Mrs. Jones asked Cindy what she thought of Eva.

"Wal, I dunno," replied Cindy. "She seems willin' to do what I tell her, and Ely thinks she is an awful nice little girl. Of course, we shall only have her till Mrs. Bruler gets home; that was the understandin'."

Mrs. Jones sniffed and looked wise. "I guess that'll be as long as you'll want her," she said.

"Why? aint she a good girl?" asked Cindy, suspiciously.

"Wal, that depends on what you call a good girl," said Mrs. Jones, drawing in her thin lips, and looking very grim. "I don't call no girl good that won't believe the Bible, nor the minister, nor nothin'. And if ever a good man labored with any sinner to make 'em see things right, it was the Rev. Mr. Pheelbad, when he tried to explain the Christian religion to her."

"And wouldn't she listen to him?" asked Cindy, breathlessly.

"Listen to him! Well, if she did listen, she didn't believe it no more than you believe the moon is made of green cheese. And she had the brass to tell him so."

"Why, how you talk!" cried Cindy in a horrified voice.

"I guess if I should tell you what she said; how she blasphemed, you'd be more astonished yet."

"How was it? Tell me all about it," panted Cindy, leaning forward and laying her hand on Mrs. Jones' arm in her excitement.

"Why, you see, Mr. Pheelbad was tryin' to explain the Bible to her, for she had told me that she did not think it was as interestin' as the Greek —Greek—well, I can't just remember—but it was some kind of ology. What do you think of that?"

"She said the Bible wasn't so interestin'?" asked Cindy.

"Yes, the Holy Bible."

"Land sakes! How dare she say it?"

"Wait and I will tell you what was even worse than that. She wouldn't be converted by anything I could say to her, so I got Brother Pheelbad to teach her. Well, he explained and explained, and told her the story of Christ's coming into the world on purpose to save sinners' souls, and she up an' asked him what became of all the souls of the people that lived on earth before Christ's time, and if they was all lost. He told her he supposed not, because, of course, they did not know anything

about Christ, so of course their souls wasn't lost. But he told her that after Christ came, only those that believed in Him was saved, all others lost, and that little upstart told him right there that if that was the case, he might better have—Oh! I'm most afraid to say the awful words. But God fergive me—she thought He might better have staid away."

"Oh! my land!" cried Cindy. "Did she say that?"

"She did," replied Mrs. Jones, in an awful voice.

The two women sat looking at each other in horrified silence for a few moments; then Mrs. Jones resumed: "I couldn't bear the sight of her after that. I just thought of them words every time I laid eyes on her. I felt so sorry for Brother Pheelbad to see him feel so bad. He said she was the hardest case he had ever found. She didn't even seem to know that it was wicked fer her to talk so. He said mebbe her day of grace was past, and if it was, there wa'n't no use. We'd have to give it up. I didn't turn her out right away, but I wished afterward I had, for it would have saved my innocent boy some sufferin', but I kep' her till one day when I was away, she took advantage of my bein' gone, and flogged Eddie with a great big cane. I thought that was more'n human patience could stand and I turned her out, bag and baggage.

"Mrs. Bruler took her in, which surprised me more'n anything, for I thought Mrs. Bruler was my friend, but she aint, and when I tried to tell her about it, she said it didn't make no difference to her what that girl believed or didn't believe;

that was nothing to her, and she even kept Eddie's dog away from him, and wouldn't give him up. I see the dog is hangin' around here now, 'cause that girl is here."

"Wal, you have told me a good deal that I never heard before," said Cindy. "That girl never mentioned any of this to me."

"I should think not," snorted Mrs. Jones, "fer it aint anything to her credit, so why should she?"

"She's a sly thing er she'd a told me about it. She's"—

Just then there was a bang on the door, and in bolted Eddie Jones all out of breath with running. "Ma! ma!" he cried, "I've been followin' that girl Eva, and she went to the grocery an' bought some things and then sneaked it fer the woods, and I pretended I was goin' another way, but when she didn't see me, I followed her, and what do you think?"

"What?" "What?" cried the two women.

"She's in the sugar shanty out in Lexington's woods, and she give the stuff she bought at the grocery to a feller that's in the shanty, and when I come away they set there talkin' like old chums, and he's the same one that asked me about her and then come over here from our house."

The two women exchanged meaning glances.

"Now what do you think?" asked Mrs. Jones.

"Wal, I never," said Cindy. "What do you s'pose she's carryin' stuff to a feller like that for?"

"Why, can't you see that this feller must be a tramp 'er a robber 'er somethin', an' she's helpin' him on

the sly? I shouldn't be a bit surprised if they're a pair of burglars, an' have come here to rob an' pillage. You'd better look out fer your silver to-night, Mrs. Nayburn, that's all I've got to say. I'm glad she ain't stayin' to my house. It's my opinion they're a pair of burglars from the city. Come, Eddie, we must be goin'."

The mother and son went out leaving Cindy gasping with horror, and speechless with astonishment.

"You got back just in time," said Cindy grimly, as Eva took off her hat and put on an apron preparatory to helping get the evening meal. "It's most half past four and company's here. Miss Erlwin come half an hour ago.

Eva noticed a difference in Cindy's manner toward her, but she busied herself in the kitchen, where Cindy gave her directions in a tone of voice and with a tightening of her lips which boded no good to the object of her displeasure. Eva thought she felt put out because she did not return sooner, so she gave it no further thought. She waited on table during supper and she could hardly take her eyes off the beautiful girl who sat there as a guest, and who seemed out of place amid such humble surroundings. Jessamine noticed that the young girl who was helping Cindy was unusually pretty and delicate looking, but she gave no further attention to her. After the meal was over Jessamine went to her room to unpack some things, and Ely went out to see a friend who was ill. The storm had increased in violence until the force of it shook the house and made the windows rattle.

Eva had just finished putting away the dishes when Cindy said: "Now that there is a chance to speak to you without bein' overheard, I want to ask you if you had a visitor here in my house yesterday afternoon?"

Eva looked surprised and hesitated an instant before replying. She hardly knew what to say. Dick had told her to say nothing of his coming, and she did not wish to deny the truth. Evidently Cindy had heard of it so she might as well acknowledge it. "Yes," she said, "a boy whom I knew in the city came here to see me yesterday when you were out."

"Why didn't you tell me of it?" demanded Cindy suspiciously.

"I didn't think you would care or want to know," faltered Eva, flushing with embarrassment which Cindy at once construed as guilt.

"He said he would rather I would not mention it."

"Oh!" snorted Cindy. "He told you not to tell me that he was here? Why, I should like to know? If his intentions had been honest he would be willin' I should know."

Eva's fair face flushed crimson now. Her eyes sparkled with indignant fire. She could not bear to hear Dick spoken of as though he was a criminal.

"Now," said Cindy wrathfully, her voice rising in her excitement until it penetrated to the bedroom where Jessamine could not help hearing what she said, "Didn't you go to the woods this

afternoon and stay there with this same feller fer two mortal hours?"

"I did," replied Eva, with a haughty lifting of her head.

"Wal, I'll be jiggered!" cried Cindy her voice rising to a shriek. "If you aint got a pile of brass to stand there an' own it up as cool as a cucumber. You shameless little hussy. I've heard all about you this afternoon. Mrs. Jones was here while you was visitin' that young tough out there in the woods, an' she told me just what a heathen you are, an' how you refused to believe the Bible an' how you abused Eddie, her little boy, an' it was him that see that feller come here yesterday. He said he come there first an' asked fer you, an' when he told him you was stayin' here he come straight here. It's a wonder he didn't rob this house yesterday with you to help him. I've heard of just such cases. These innocent lookin' girls from the city gittin' places to work a purpose to get a chance to let a gang of thieves into the house to rob and murder their employer's family. I aint so green as to be took in that way. I have to thank Mrs. Jones and Eddie fer warnin' me in time. Eddie follered you and see you meet this feller in the woods today and he come right an' told me. So if you and that young desperado was intendin' to burgle this house you've missed fire this time. I aint goin' to keep you here another night, so you can just put on your hat an' git right out o' this house."

Eva tried to vindicate herself and Dick, but

Cindy would listen to nothing she could say. She brought Eva's few belongings and handed them to her, then opening the door, said, "Git! you can go to the woods an' stay with your accomplisher. You can't stay here tonight."

As she opened the door a blast of wind almost took her breath away. The storm was raging wildly now, and flashes of lightning were all that illuminated the darkness of the night. The rain was descending in torrents.

With a little gasping cry Eva recoiled from the prospect of making a battle with the elements.

"Oh! not in this dreadful wind and rain and darkness," she said piteously.

"It's good enough for you. It serves you right! Now git!" cried Cindy pushing her through the doorway.

With a cry of despair Eva went forth into the stygian darkness. Cindy slammed the door shut and turned to face Jessamine who was standing in the center of the room, a witness to this last act. Her face was white and her brown eyes glowing with excitement as she advanced to Cindy's side and seizing her fat arm said in low, intense tones: "Call her back instantly. I'm sure you have punished her enough for anything she may have done. She will be drenched in this awful storm."

"I aint goin' to call her back," declared Cindy sullenly. "She may go to the woods an' stay with"—

If the sentence was ever finished Jessamine did

not hear it, for she had snatched up a shawl and dashed out of the house. Running out to the street she called wildly for Eva to come back, but there was no answer but the howling of the wind and crashing of the trees. Then a blinding flash of lightning which seemed to last almost a minute revealed a little figure struggling against the fury of the storm and moving down the road as fast as was possible in the face of such overpowering gusts as were sweeping the torrents of rain down upon it. Jessamine started in pursuit calling to her to "stop"—to "come back," but the noise of the storm drowned her voice before it could reach Eva, and Jessamine determined to overtake her. But the little slender figure kept on just ahead, though by the flashes of lightning Jessamine could see that she was gaining upon the object of her pursuit. Hoping to overtake her she struggled on, but she did not gain very fast, while the storm seemed to increase in violence.

"I cannot leave the poor child to perish," thought Jessamine, "and she can find no shelter on this road nearer than the haunted house. She will never be able to reach the woods, and if she did, their shelter would be more dangerous than the open fields, on account of falling limbs. Oh! what shall I do?"

"She paused an instant and turned her back to the wind to catch her breath, then turned again and hurried on. Her light slippers were soaked through and so also were her garments, but she saw by another flash that the little figure was only a short distance ahead now, and she hoped

to soon overtake her. She had no breath with which to call out, and all her hope lay in covering the distance between them. It seemed like half an hour to the exhausted girl, though it was really only three or four minutes before another flash showed her the object of her pursuit only a few feet ahead. Making a superhuman effort she at last grasped at Eva's garments and succeeded in catching her skirts and arresting her flight. Then slipping her arm through her's, she brought her to a standstill, at the same time stumbling over a soft, yielding body which was near the ground. It was Curley who was following his best friend, and he gave a little cry when Jessamine tripped over him.

For a moment Jessamine was too exhausted and out of breath to speak, then she gasped out: "Come back to the house and I will see that you are not turned out again."

"I guess it is nearer to the shanty in the woods than it is to go back," said Eva. "We had both better go on."

"We can't go to the woods!" cried Jessamine. "We might get killed by falling trees." As she spoke a gust of wind almost lifted her off the ground. She was blown against a tree by the side of the road, while Eva dropped down on the ground to keep from being carried away. Jessamine clasped her arms around the tree trunk to steady herself and called to Eva to do the same. As soon as she dared get upon her feet, she took refuge with Jessamine, holding on to the tree for safety.

"I believe the wind grows worse and worse," said Jessamine. "What shall we do if we can't go back? I am drenched to the skin and I know you are also. If the storm does not abate before long what will become of us?"

As she finished speaking there came another long, continued flash, and by its glow, she saw yawning only a short distance beyond, the entrance to the grounds of the haunted house. At the sight a tumult of conflicting thoughts took possession of her. If they could once get inside the grounds the masses of evergreen trees that swept the earth with their heavy branches, would be a protection from the wind so that they might be able to reach the house itself. But what a shelter to choose on such a night as this. Dare they take refuge within those dark, forbidding walls? They knew not what might be there before them. The thought struck terror to her heart. It was very different, entering such a place on such a night as this, to going into it with a couple of adventurous companions on a bright, moonlight night. She thought rapidly for the next few moments, while she held fast to the tree. But she began to feel very cold and chilly, in her thin garments, saturated as they were. Curley was crouching at Eva's feet and whining. Jessamine put out a hand and touched Eva's arm, only to find her shaking as with an ague.

"You are cold and so am I," she said between her chattering teeth. "There is a vacant house near by. Shall we try to reach it?"

"I think we had better try," said Eva. "We shall be chilled through if we stay here."

That decided Jessamine. She would risk it. "Any port in a storm" was acceptable, even if it was a haunted house. This girl's health as well as her own must be taken into consideration. If they did not get under some kind of shelter they would both take violent colds. She grasped Eva about the waist.

"Now, when there is a lull in the wind we will make a dash for the gateway. Now!"

They made the effort and succeeded, and as Jessamine had reasoned, after they were once inside the grounds the force of the wind was broken by the shrubbery and evergreens. They made their way along the grass-grown carriage drive until the grim walls of the house itself rose dark, gloomy and forbidding from the surrounding trees. They ascended the little balcony and entered by the broken door, where Earnest Grayland had entered on that eventful night which came so forcibly now to Jessamine's mind, and stood still just within the room, waiting to get their breath and listening for any sound that would indicate that there was any occupant ahead of them; but all was silent and deserted, and the only sound to be heard was the roaring of the storm outside.

The darkness was intense, and it was some moments before Jessamine ventured to move about in search of the old couch which she remembered as standing in this room. But she finally groped her way cautiously and silently to it, and passing

her hands carefully over it and finding it all clear, she seated herself upon it and drew Eva down beside her, while Curley with a sigh of satisfaction, stretched himself at their feet.

For what seemed like an hour to Jessamine they sat there in silence, listening to the wind, the rattle of the vines, the crash of the swaying branches and the beating of the rain. She dared not speak aloud for fear there might be some other tenant in this grewsome place. She could not see her companion, the darkness was so great, excepting when a flash of lightning more prolonged than usual illuminated the windows.

"She is a courageous little thing," she thought, "for not many girls of her age would endure what she has tonight without a whimper. She never objected to enter this place or expressed the slightest fear, and she looks so delicate, too. But she probably thinks this is merely an empty house, and knows nothing of the tragedy that occurred here or the reputation which the place has of being haunted, or wild horses could not have dragged her in here. She is nothing but a child, anyway. How could Aunt Cindy have the heart to turn her out such a night as this? How fortunate it was that I happened to be there. If I had not, the chances are she would have tried to reach the shanty in the woods, and she might have been killed. If Uncle Ely had been at home this would not have happened. When he gets home won't there be a scene?"

She did not take into consideration the proba-

bility that Cindy would not say anything to him about the affair until morning, and that he would suppose they were all snugly in bed when he came home from his sick friend's. But these were the real facts in the case:

After Jessamine ran out into the street and called, and Eva did not return, Cindy expected to see Jessamine re-enter the house, but when five minutes had elapsed and she did not come, she threw a shawl over her head and waddled out to the street. Seeing nothing of her out there, she called but there was no answer. She called again several times and hearing nothing of her, she began to feel alarmed. Going back into the house she lighted a lantern and wrapping herself in a large cloak she started out again. She was too heavy to be in much danger of being blown away, but she could see nothing in the darkness, her lantern having been blown out by the first gust of wind, and not being at all sure-footed she had not gone far when she slipped in the soft mud, and came down with a thud and a splash in a puddle of water, with a force that shook every pound of flesh in her body, and caused her to see flashes which were not a part of the storm. Her lantern was broken in the fall, and when she could get upon her feet again she made her way back to the house as quickly as she could.

She was frightened now at what she had done. Not that she regretted her harshness to Eva, but she was very uneasy about Jessamine. She went to bed in anything but an enviable frame of mind.

"I don't see what possessed Jessamine to chase after that little trollop," she said to herself, "and nobody knows what'll happen to her. It aint no place fer her out there in the woods along with them two young desperadoes. If anythin' happens to her they will all blame me fer it, an' her father'll be awful mad."

She feigned sleep when Ely came in, and he tip-toed about so as not to awaken anyone, but although she kept her eyes closed she could not sleep and morning found her still awake.

CHAPTER XIX.

In the little house near the western gate, occupied by Eva's old nurse and her husband, a strange scene was being enacted on the night of the storm. They had retired early, being fatigued with the work of the day, and were slumbering in spite of the noise made by the warring elements. The little clock on the shelf in their cozy little sitting-room had just chimed eleven when the woman awoke with a cry, and sat up in bed. Her husband turned sleepily and asked her what was the matter, but she was already out of bed and putting on her clothes with feverish haste. He rubbed his eyes and, raising himself up, looked at her in amazement. "What does ail you, Annie?" he said impatiently. "What is the matter?"

"Eva has come," she said, turning toward him a face transfigured with joy. "I have just seen my mistress again, in a dream, and she looked so happy and smiling, and her face and form glowed with light. She said so plainly that I heard every word as distinctly as though you had spoken to me: 'Eva has come'—then raising her arm she pointed in the direction of the great house and said, 'Eva is there.' I'm sure I don't know what

it means any more than you do, but I am going to see."

"You're crazy, Annie," said the man in an anxious tone. "You have brooded over this matter until you are gone clean daft about it. You are not going up to the big house at this time of night, in this raging storm, on such a wild goose chase as that, I hope."

"I am going up there," she said joyously, "for I know that something has happened that concerns Eva. I saw my mistress as plainly as I ever saw anyone in my life, and I can hear the tones of her voice now, so clearly did she speak the words, 'Eva has come!—Eva is there.' Do you think she would come to me like that if there was no reason for it? Something has happened. I can feel it."

"You dreamed it," said the man. "I tell you, Annie, you must not give way to such fancies. Your mind will become clouded, and the first thing I know I shall have you under a doctor's care. You should not allow yourself to imagine such things, and dwell upon them all the time. Come back to bed and be sensible."

She laughed out merrily. "I am going to see if Eva has come," she said, leaving the room, and with a groan the man got up out of bed and began to put on his clothes, preparatory to accompanying her. He could hear her stepping about in the next room, getting matches and her shawl and lantern, but when he finally came out into the little sitting-room she was gone. He hurried on his rain-coat, and opening the outside door dashed

out in pursuit of her. He knew the direction she would take. That she would enter by the back door, and he turned his steps in that direction, bemoaning the folly of turning out on such a night as this, on such a crazy errand.

Jessamine and Eva sitting there on the old couch, with their arms about each other, had just whispered that the storm seemed to be abating; that the wind did not seem to be blowing quite so furiously, when Jessamine's heart gave a great bound of terror at the sound of a door slammed shut somewhere in the vastness of the great house. She held her breath and listened, striving to control the trembling which seized her, for she did not wish to frighten her companion.

"What was that?" whispered Eva.

"A door swinging in the wind, I guess," replied Jessamine, striving to appear calm.

"You are trembling," whispered Eva. "Are you afraid?"

"What is there to fear?" replied Jessamine. She was almost certain she could hear footsteps approaching, but she struggled against the feeling of terror which had taken possession of her. Yes, surely there was the sound of feet in the hall above. Curley raised his head with a low growl. A light glimmered through the archway which opened into the hall, and the sound of footsteps descending the grand-staircase was plainly audible.

With their faces turned in the direction of the approaching footsteps, and their eyes fixed on the light, which was growing brighter every moment,

the two girls waited in silence the entrance of their visitor. Jessamine's face was white with fear, but Eva did not seem to consider the situation as in any way frightful. As they gazed there came into view, leisurely descending the stairs, the figure of a little woman wrapped in a huge shawl, and carrying a lantern. She reached the bottom of the stairs, and turning, came toward them. Curley sprang up with a bark and a startled growl, and the woman paused and raised the lantern on high, peering through the gloom toward the dog.

"Is anyone here?" she said in sweet, clear voice, and one that was decidedly a very human voice.

Jessamine sprang up with a glad cry. "Yes, yes! We are here. We came here to get in out of the storm," she said, advancing.

The woman held the lantern so that its light fell on Jessamine's beautiful face, and a look of disappointment passed over her own. "Not this one," she said, as though speaking to herself. "I should know her, I am sure." She smiled reassuringly at Jessamine, and patted Curley, who was wagging his tail and uttering whines of welcome to the new comer. She advanced a step or two into the room, and seeing another form behind Jessamine, again raised the lantern and stepped forward, so that its rays fell full on Eva's upturned face.

With a scream that the two girls never forgot she dropped the light, and falling on her knees before Eva she clasped her arms about her, and drawing the young girl to her heart she began to cry and murmur incoherent words, all the time caressing

her, and calling her her baby, her lost one, her darling, and the two girls were becoming fully convinced that the woman was a harmless lunatic, until in her wild ravings she called her "Eva," and while the mention of that name in this house, sent a thrill of wonder and joy tingling through Jessamine's nerves, it filled Eva only with a puzzled surprise, that this woman should know her name, for she could not recall ever having seen her before this night.

Jessamine had picked up the light and was holding it so that it shone directly on the actors in this strange scene. Curley not liking the woman's violent demonstrations toward his beloved mistress, ran about and barked his disapproval and occasionally tugged at the woman's dress in a vain effort to make her release Eva from her close embrace.

For at least five minutes Mrs. Prayton was so overcome with her agitation that she could make no explanation of her conduct, but after the first transports of her joy had subsided in a degree, she turned to Jessamine and pointing upward toward the portrait of Eva's mother over the fireplace, she said tremulously:

"Isn't she the very image of her mother?"

Jessamine looked at the portrait, and then at Eva, and her heart bounded like a wild thing in her excitement.

"Who are you?" she gasped, seizing Eva's arm and gazing intently into her face.

"My name is Eva Dumond," replied Eva, wondering if Jessamine, too, had gone insane.

Jessamine fell back with a low cry. That name was another link in the chain, and while she stood silent, gazing first at Eva, then at the portrait, and then at Mrs. Prayton, the latter took the lantern and held it so that both the portrait and Eva's face were plainly visible. Jessamine could see that the resemblance was striking, and she began to realise why Eva had attracted her attention when she saw her for the first time that night at her uncle's house.

The nurse now began to act more like a rational being. She took Eva's hands in both her own.

"Your name is Evangeline Grayland," she said, "and you are my lost baby, and that is your mother's picture, and this house is your home, and I am your old nurse. You were stolen from me when you were about a year old."

At this juncture the slamming of a door again echoed through the house. "That is Joe, I guess," said Mrs. Prayton, "he has come to see where I am."

Heavy steps were heard approaching and soon the man appeared in the archway. "I saw light in this part of the house so I thought I'd find you here," he said, then gazing curiously at the two girls, he relapsed into silence. His wife stepped to his side and laid her hand on his arm.

"Joe," she said in a low, clear voice in which the happiness of her heart found expression, "my dreams have come true. That is Eva, and you see she has come home. I found her here just as I felt sure I should. Oh! Joe, isn't it wonderful?"

"Well, I must confess that it is," he said. "I thought you had gone crazy, but if that is the girl you have been lookin' for and dreamin' about it really is wonderful. I'll own I'm beat in the argument. But are you sure you have found the right one?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" she cried. "I recognised her instantly. Just look here." She led him up before the portrait, and turning Eva tenderly about so that he could see her features, she said triumphantly, "There! Joe, you can never doubt it now, can you?"

"They are as much alike as two peas," said the man.

All this which had transpired so rapidly had awakened great surprise and wonder in Eva's mind. She did not understand it all, but she realized that she had found in the person of this woman a friend who had known her origin and been connected in some manner with her life during her infancy. But the whole thing was, of course, not clear to her. She said very little, but she was conscious that a great happiness was taking possession of her. The thought that she had at last found someone who really knew who she was and all about her parents and her former home, was a great satisfaction to her. Jessamine was radiant. To think that it should be her privilege to send the blessed news to Ernest that Evangeline was found, seemed too good to be true. She felt afraid that she would awake and find it a dream.

The nurse now proposed that they all return to

her cottage for the remainder of the night, which they gladly consented to do. When they arrived there the little woman made them change their wet clothing for warm, dry garments, after which she made some tea and set out a lunch for them, insisting that they should eat something and retire immediately after, and wait until morning before they explained anything further.

They soon were in a warm, soft bed, and after the excitement and fatigue they had undergone, tired nature drifted them into a sound and peaceful sleep. The sun was high in the heavens the next morning when they awoke, but not until breakfast was over would the nurse begin the thousand and one questions she was longing to to ask.

After they returned to the little sitting room they began their several stories, and when Jessamine and Mrs. Prayton had finished their part of the recital, Eva fully understood that she was restored to her right place in the world at last.

Then she told them all her story, but shielding Fanchette so much in that part pertaining to Will Evers, and the influence he exercised in causing her to leave the city, that the nurse merely supposed that he was a suitor for her hand in marriage and whom she disliked so intensely that she fled to the country to escape his unwelcome attentions. Jessamine understood the real situation, of course, but she said no word that could prejudice the nurse against Fanchette.

When Eva told them of Dick Delmorn, and how

good and kind he had always been, not alone to her, but to everything living that ever fell into his hands, and how he had come to her in Greendell and brought her kitten in a covered basket, the nurse proposed that her husband go to the shanty and bring him home to stay with them; but Jessamine, who had been thinking very fast all through Eva's story, had decided to make the most of an opportunity which presented itself forcibly to her. She would go to the old couple, Mr. and Mrs. Brown, who were in such straightened circumstances, and ask them to take Dick as a boarder and at the same time let him think he was working for them. She would pay his board and he could help Mr. Brown about his garden, and in that way the plan would help both them and him. She proposed this plan to the nurse and Eva and they thought it a very generous offer on her part, and they said so with enthusiasm.

"I have often wanted to help those old people," said Jessamine, "but I could think of no way that would not wound their pride. I know that they have to pinch every way to get along and procure the necessaries of life, and if I pay them a good sum for Dick's board, it will add to their income. And at the same time, if Dick thinks he is earning his board by working for Mr. Brown, he will be satisfied and happy for a time, until I can see Mr. Grayland, and I am sure he will give him a chance in life that will put him in a way to be self-supporting."

And thus it was arranged. Jessamine was to

notify Ernest Grayland of what had transpired, and Eva was to stay with her old nurse until he came or sent for her.

"I want to keep my little Eva with me as long as I can, for just see how many years of her sweet life I have been deprived of her," she said, and Jessamine told her she did not wonder at her reluctance to give her up again.

Later in the day, when Jessamine returned to the house of her uncle, she found the window-shades down, and everything wearing a deserted look, but the door was not locked, and upon entering the house she heard moans issuing from the bedroom, off the sitting-room, and going to the door rapped for admittance. A faint "come in" was the response, and she entered the darkened room which was odorous with camphor, and when her eyes became accustomed to the gloom she discovered Cindy in a shapeless heap upon the bed, sobbing and moaning as though in great distress.

"What is the matter?" asked Jessamine. "Are you ill?"

At the sound of that voice Cindy sprang up with an alacrity which surprised Jessamine, and throwing her arms around the girl, hugged her enthusiastically. "Oh! is it you?" she cried. "I thought mebbe you was dead—killed in the storm. Ely said he shouldn't wonder if you was. He said if anything had happened to you I'd be responsible for it. He was awful mad. I never see him so mad in all my life. He didn't find it out till this mornin' and then I thought he'd raise the roof.

He's gone now, and he said if he didn't find you all safe somewhere, he'd never live with me another day. Oh, he went on perfectly awful. He said I was the biggest fool that was ever put into the shape of a woman. He said that girl, Evy, was all right, an probably the boy was too. He said Eddie Jones was a little devil, an' his mother was no better, and that if I'd had as many brains as an angleworm I wouldn't drive anybody out of the house for anything that them two had said. Mebby now, that you have come back all safe, he will come home; but I never see him so bilin' mad as he was when he went away."

Jessamine smiled in spite of her indignation which she had intended to express in regard to Cindy's driving Eva forth into the storm. But she now saw that Cindy was getting punishment meted out to her in another way, so she did not say anything to add to her misery.

When Cindy had wiped her eyes, and her sobs had subsided, she asked: "Where did you stay last night?" and when Jessamine told her that they had first taken refuge in the haunted house, her remorse knew no bounds.

"How did you ever dare go in there?" she said. "I believe I would lie right down in a ditch of muddy water and make my bed in it before I'd go into that awful place. I don't believe nothin' in ghosts, but I'd never go in there in the daytime, let alone at night. It's a wonder you are here to tell of it."

When Cindy had calmed down sufficiently, Jes-

samine told her the wonderful revelations in regard to Eva. She listened in open-mouthed astonishment. Ely coming in before it was finished, greeted Jessamine with relief and joy.

"I went to the woods and found the boy, all right," he said. "He was there in the shanty, and he hadn't seen anything of either of you, and then I went up to Lexington's, and you hadn't been there, and then I didn't know what to do. I started back, and on the way I saw Joe Prayton, and he said they found you in the haunted house and took you home with them, and he guessed you'd got back here by this time. I was mighty glad to hear it, I tell you. There are trees blown down in the woods, and limbs broken off and the roads are washed out in places. The boy in the shanty said he thought the roof would be smashed in, the trees crashed about so. But he is all right, and the roof of the shanty is whole, so there was no harm done to him."

Jessamine began at the time when she caught up with Eva, and gave him a description of their experience in the haunted house. Then, continuing, told him the story of Eva in detail. He listened in amazement, and when she had finished, he expressed his satisfaction in emphatic terms.

"I knew there was good blood in that little girl," he said. "I thought there was something about her looks that was familiar, and now this accounts for it. She resembles her mother, and I used to see her when she came out here to the old place; but that was so many years ago it is no wonder

I could not remember where I had seen a face like hers."

They talked for some time on this subject and discussed Eva's prospects, and while they were thus engaged, Mr. Lexington and Cecil came and expressed their joy at finding Jessamine safe. They urged her to return home with them, but she wished to attend to the business she had planned of providing a home for Dick, so she promised to come to them in a day or two, and they took their departure.

After they had gone, and peace having been restored in the Nayburn household, she sat down and wrote a long letter to Ernest, in which she told him of the wonderful good fortune which had befallen her in being permitted to find his long-lost cousin in such a remarkable manner. This done, she started on her mission to Mr. and Mrs. Brown.

The little cottage was as bright and cheerful as usual, and it seemed to Jessamine that the white wings of peace always hovered over this little home. She found the old couple engaged in looking over some books on gardening, and making plans for another year. They welcomed her with pleasure, and she asked them if the storm had done them any damage. They replied that there was none of any consequence. Only a little soil washed out of the garden, two or three limbs broken off the fruit trees, and a little leak in the roof, where a few shingles blew off, but they were very thankful that was all.

Jessamine expressed her satisfaction that it was no worse, and then plunged directly into the subject in question. She told them Eva's story and how even now Ernest Grayland was searching for her. Then she made her proposal that they should take Dick to live with them for a time until something should be decided on in regard to his position in life. That she would pay his board to them and they were to allow him to think he was working for it, and after he had been with them four weeks they were to pay him a dollar a week, which Jessamine would also furnish, if he proved helpful to Mr. Brown. And so it was arranged. The only thing upon which they disagreed was the price of his board. When Jessamine mentioned five dollars a week they both declared that it was too much. But Jessamine was firm.

"You will have a good many steps to take for him," she said to Mrs. Brown, "and there will be his mending to do, for boys are hard on clothes. It is a small remuneration for all that. I will pay you five dollars a week for his board, and when he has been here four weeks, if he is helpful to you, I will raise it to six so you can pay him one dollar a week and that is little enough. Mr. Grayland will interest himself in Dick on account of what Dick has done for Eva, and he will find some good trade or business for him, or perhaps send him to school or adopt him. I'm sure he will do something handsome for him."

"But we live very plainly and simply," said Mrs.

Brown, "and three dollars a week would more than pay for what the boy would cost us."

"Never mind," said Jessamine, laughing, "I shall pay just what I have proposed and not one cent less. So that is settled, and I hope he will help you enough to make up for the extra work you will have to do for him."

"We will be very glad to take him like that," she said, "and shall be more than paid."

Jessamine left them with a light heart, and went directly to the house of Joe Prayton, where she told Eva and Mrs. Prayton of her success. It was decided that Eva should be the one to carry the news to Dick that a place had been found for him where he could work about the house and garden and earn his board until something better turned up. So that afternoon Eva went out to the woods and acquainted Dick with her good fortune as well as his.

"And just think, Dick," she said, when she had finished the story of her remarkable experiences, "if you had sent me to any other village than this one, I might never have found my real home, and my own relatives. So you see I owe all this good luck to you."

Dick listened in wonder and joyful amazement to it all, and then said: "Eva, we have struck it rich, that's sure. I am almost as lucky as you are, for now I will never have to go back to the city and sell papers again. I shall like working in the garden for Mr. Brown, for I have always wished I could do something like that, and I like the

country. But just to think that the haunted house belongs to you, and has all this time. It is just like a fairy tale, isn't it?"

"It is," she said smiling, with tears in her eyes, "and I am so happy, Dick, I can't tell you how happy I am."

CHAPTER XX.

Jessamine's letter brought Ernest Grayland in hot haste to Greendell, and there was an interesting meeting in the little cottage of the Praytons. He was much pleased with Eva, and pronounced himself satisfied beyond a doubt as to her identity. There was a council held at which Jessamine, Eva, Mr. and Mrs. Prayton and Ernest were present, and it was decided that Eva must be sent away to school for three years at least, that the haunted house should be called by that grim title no more, and steps should be taken to restore it to its former grandeur, and Eva desired that it should be known by its former name, the one which her parents had bestowed upon it, that of Arcadia.

"And we will try to make it worthy of the name," said Ernest.

"But it will cost an awful lot of money, won't it?" asked Eva.

They all smiled. "We won't worry about that," said Ernest. "There will be money enough forthcoming when it is required. You will be a rich woman, Eva."

"Oh!" she cried. "I am so glad. Then I can provide for Dick and Fanchette, and they will never

be obliged to go without anything they may want."

"Yes," said Ernest, "both Fanchette and Dick shall be provided for."

"And when may I go back and see Fanchette?" asked Eva.

Jessamine and Ernest exchanged glances. They had shielded Fanchette's name from reproach thus far, not wishing that anyone here should know the truth regarding her mode of life. They both knew that it would be better for Eva not to have that become known. In telling Eva's story they had assiduously avoided mentioning in what street she had lived, or what the circumstances were of this woman who had given her a home. They were very anxious that no hint of the truth should become known, and they hoped to manage it so that the past life of the woman who had reared Eva from infancy should be buried in oblivion.

But Eva begged to be allowed to see Fanchette and Ernest promised her that he would arrange it so that she might. He intended to go to Fanchette and ask her to give up her present way of living, promising to provide her with an annuity which would be quite sufficient for her needs, and ask her for Eva's sake to let the past remain a secret so much as it was possible; that she should do or say nothing that would arouse suspicion toward the young girl who was so soon to take her place in the world. From what he had seen of Fanchette he was quite convinced that her fondness for Eva would be the strongest safeguard. But he felt that it was a very un-

pleasant complication. He hardly knew what to do in regard to arranging a meeting between them. Eva must not be allowed to return for one instant to the house of Fanchette as it now was. If she must see Fanchette, the visit must be arranged to take place somewhere else. But where?

It was Jessamine's wit that came to the rescue. When they were left alone for a few moments she said: "Go to Fanchette Dumond and lay the case before her, reserving only one fact, that of Eva's fortune being as great as it is. Let her know that Eva is well off but do not inform her that she has almost a million in her own right. Appeal to the woman's better nature to do what is fair and right for Eva's sake, and I will wager that she will show as unselfish and self-sacrificing a heart as you will find among the so-called respectable class. If I am any judge of human nature from appearances, I will guarantee that this woman who has cared for Eva from her infancy, and shielded her from contact with the vile beings who surrounded them on every side in that locality, will show a heart and an amount of feeling that would do credit to a citizen of high standing.

"Show her that you trust her, appeal to the better side of her nature and she will not disappoint us, I am sure. Then when she agrees to all this change and consents to renounce her present way of living, have her come to Greendell—no one knows her here—and put up at the village inn for a few days so that she may see and be with Eva for a time before Eva goes away to school. Mrs.

Prayton will insist that Eva stay with her until that time, and if Fanchette stops at the inn, no one will be the wiser. No one will be inconvenienced and we will not be conscience smitten at the thought that we have allowed any of our friends here to entertain her without knowing her real character. Don't you think that will be the best way?"

"I do," he said, "and we will do just that way exactly."

So it was arranged that Eva should remain with her old nurse until she went to boarding school. That Dick should stay with Mr. and Mrs. Brown until Ernest decided on what was best for him. But he insisted on taking Dick, and Dick's future, entirely upon himself. He declared that he should enjoy the management of the boy, and that he should be his charge, and he would pay his expenses. He approved of what Jessamine had done, and decided to let him remain where he was for a time, but he insisted on paying his way.

The glorious month of September was drawing to a close, and for three weeks Eva and Dick seemed living in a paradise of their own. They explored every nook and corner of the old place, and as Dick's duties at Mr. Brown's did not take all his time, they wandered about the village and searched the woods and fields for Nature's treasures and curios which are scattered with such a lavish hand in the country and wild woods. They enjoyed every minute of these golden days.

Tom Lexington and Dick became great friends and planned great things which they meant to accomplish sometime.

Mrs. Prayton showed Eva all the treasures she had guarded all these long, lonely years and every day was filled to the brim with boundless delight.

Ernest and Jessamine had returned to the city a few days after the council at the Prayton cottage, and Fanchette was to come to Greendell the first week in October and spend a few days at the inn. She had agreed to all the terms which Ernest proposed, and expressed herself glad and thankful to be permitted to leave the life she had been leading, and have an annuity that would keep her in the common comforts of life.

"If you could know how tired I am of it all," she said to him, "and how like a glimpse of Paradise seems the chance you have given me to leave the old life behind me forever, you would never doubt me or give yourself one moment's uneasiness that I would not keep my word."

He expressed himself satisfied with her assurances, and she immediately began her preparations to leave the locality in which she had lived, and leave it forever.

"When once I turn my face from here I shall never look back," she said to herself, "and I only wish I could forget it entirely."

The news that the heiress of the haunted house had been found and restored to her own, ran like wild-fire through the village. Great was the wonder, and many the conjectures thereto. It was the topic of conversation for weeks. Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Bruler, and Mrs. Nayburn were objects of great interest to the rest of the community, because they

had "entertained the angel unawares." Mrs. Bruler was still absent from home, so they had to content themselves with deluging Mrs. Jones and Cindy with questions concerning her, which made it somewhat embarrassing for both of them.

Mrs. Jones felt that she had missed the opportunity of a lifetime. "To think," she said, to Rev. Mr. Pheelbad, "that that girl should turn out to be the little lost heiress of the Graylands, that everybody supposed the Gypsy woman murdered, and that she came right to me as if sent by Providence, and then I should make the mistake of letting her leave my house, when if I had kept her, and done everything for her, she might have made Eddie and me independent for life. We might now be her most valued friends. Just think what she would be able to do for us with all her money. And then to think I was so blind as to let such a chance slip through my fingers. It seems hard, Brother Pheelbad. I have always tried to be a good, Christian woman, and serve the Lord, and it was through that very thing that I failed in in this. I never could feel toward her as I did at first, after she refused to accept the teachings of the Bible, that you and I labored so hard to instill into her young mind, and then when she whipped my darling, innocent boy, I was filled with righteous indignation, and cast her off. I think my punishment is pretty heavy, when I have only tried to do my duty."

"Never mind, sister," replied the minister, "remember that the 'Lord chasteneth whom He lov-

eth, and the ways of Providence are mysterious and past finding out.' You remember that Moses was one of God's chosen servants, and that he tried to do his duty and was very faithful, but because he failed in one point he was not permitted to enter the Promised Land. He was taken up where he could view it afar off, but he was not allowed to enter it. You are like Moses, one of God's most faithful, devoted servants, but you can only view from a distance the joys which might have been yours, but for that one mistake. I feel for you, sister, I feel very bad for you."

Cindy vowed she never would speak to Mrs. Jones again, as long as she lived, for she laid the blame of her misfortune entirely to her. "And as fer that little brat of an Eddie," she said, wrathfully, "I'll take a gad to him if he ever comes into this yard agin. I never slept one wink last night, fer thinkin' how them two made a fool of me."

"I don't think they could improve much on the job Nature had already completed," said Ely. "So you did not sleep a wink, last night. Are you sure, Cindy?"

"Of course I'm sure," she snapped. "Don't you s'pose I know?"

"Did you hear me get up to let the dog out?" he asked.

"Of course I did?"

"Did you hear me get up to let him in?"

"Well, I should think I did. You made noise enough."

"That is very strange, Cindy, for I did not get

up at all, either to let the dog out or in," he said as he walked out.

The first week in October came, and with it Fanchette. The joy which Eva evinced at meeting her foster mother was deep and sincere. Fanchette was very much affected, and for two weeks the two were together every day. They strolled about the village, and through the house and grounds, which had been relieved of their gruesome title, "haunted," and would henceforth be known by the original name of "Arcadia."

Fanchette expressed her delight that Eva had fallen heir to such an inheritance, but she did not yet know the amount of money which went with the estate. She met Dick, and smilingly forgave him for the part he had played in inducing Eva to come to Greendell. "I am quite a believer in Fate," she said, "and all this looks to me very much like the workings of it. And it has turned out gloriously for us all. So, Dick, I am going to thank instead of blaming you."

It was decided that Eva should depart for boarding-school after Thanksgiving. Mrs. Prayton insisted that she should have her with her to the very last.

Fanchette went back to the city about the middle of October, and took up her abode in pleasant apartments, in a respectable quarter of the city, and entered upon her new life with joy and thankfulness. Eva promised to come and see her whenever she came home on a vacation, and Arcadia was to be taken possession of by a gang of work-

men, and Ernest and Jessamine were to superintend operations, until the place was once more restored to its former beauty. There was to be a new stable erected on the site of the former one, and wherever they were at fault in the plans Mrs. Prayton was to supply the desired information as to how it had been when she had lived there and attended to the wants of her baby mistress. It was Eva's wish that it should be made to look as much as possible as it did on the day of the tragedy. She treasured all the articles of furniture which her old nurse had so faithfully guarded far more than anything that could be bought. "For all these things are hallowed by associations which make them very dear to me," she said, and Mrs. Prayton smiled approvingly, much pleased at her appreciation.

One day, during the last week in October, Eva heard that her friend, Mrs. Bruler, had returned home, and she went to see her. It had been raining almost steadily for ten days, and the streams were swollen, and the roads thick with mud. As she neared the house she saw Dan Bruler busily engaged in emptying a wagon load of stones on top of the rose-bushes which she and Mrs. Bruler had planted in the corner of the dooryard. "The brute," thought Eva. "I wonder how she could ever come back home to him."

She asked if Mrs. Bruler was in, and he answered in the affirmative. "She's upstairs, a-bed, though," he added. "You'd better go right in and not knock, fer she won't hear ye."

Eva entered the house, and going to the foot of the stairs called softly. A faint voice bade her "come up," and she ascended the stairs and entered the little bed-room, where Mrs. Bruler lay stretched upon the bed, apparently too ill to move.

She tried to smile a greeting as Eva came to the bedside, and Eva, alarmed, asked if she was ill. Then bending down to look at her, she was horrified to see black marks about the woman's throat.

"What is it?" she cried. "Dear Mrs. Bruler, what is the matter? Oh! what can I do for you?"

"Nothing," she gasped. "I'll be better after a while. It is my throat, you see."

"I see," said Eva, "but what is the matter with your throat? It is all black and blue." Then a suspicion which seemed almost too horrible to be true, flashed through her mind. Could it be possible? The more she thought of it the more she believed it to be the fact. "You don't mean—it isn't possible is it," she faltered, "that your husband has been choking you?"

A faint nod of the head was the reply.

"Oh!" cried Eva, "how I wish I had the strength of a man. I would break every bone in his body before I was through."

She sat looking at her friend with tears gathering in her eyes, which were dark now with intense feeling.

"You must have a doctor come and put something on your throat, and see how badly you are hurt. Oh! why did he do this fiendish thing? I don't understand it."

Mrs. Bruler motioned her to bend her head lower, and with an effort whispered, "He was very angry with me because my aunt made her will in such a way that I can never have a penny of her money while he lives, but if I outlive him, I will inherit six thousand dollars."

"But you are not to blame for your aunt's doings," said Eva. "If he wanted to choke some one on account of that, why didn't he choke her? I don't see how he can blame you."

He said I had told her things about him or she wouldn't have fixed it that way. That was what made him so furious. But I did not tell her things. She had heard them from others, and she asked me if he was good to me. I could not lie to a dying woman, and all I said was 'not very,' but that decided her."

"You must have Dr. Rhine come in and examine your throat," said Eva. "I'll go for him now."

She started to leave the room, but Mrs. Bruler raised herself in bed and grasped her dress. "No, no," she gasped. "I dare not. Dan would be so mad he would turn him out of the house. I don't know what he would do."

"Well, you are going to have something done for you, and I am going to see about it now," declared Eva.

She went down stairs and, going to the door, looked out. Dan Bruler was nowhere in sight. She went to the front door, and far down the road she could see his wagon just disappearing around a corner. The sound of wheels coming from the

opposite direction caused her to look around, and she saw Ely Nayburn in his buggy, driving toward the house. She ran out to the street and hailed him, and he drew up quickly with a pleasant greeting. She hurriedly told him the situation. He listened thoughtfully until she had finished.

"Dr. Rhine is in his office," he said. "I saw him as I came by.

"Do you think she is able to get up? If she could come out and get into the buggy so I could take her to the doctor, she could have her injuries attended to and I could bring her back again. Ask her if she can go, and I'll wait."

Eva hastened back and told her friend what Mr. Nayburn said. "If you can go you ought to," she said, "and I will stay here till you come back. Perhaps I had better stay with you for a while after you come back, for he would not dare lay violent hands on you while I am here. Do go if you can get to the buggy."

"Oh, I can go," she whispered, "but I am afraid to risk it."

Eva got her shawl and assisted her to arise. Then wrapping her up warmly, she assisted her down the stairs and out to the street. Ely got out and lifted her slight form gently into the vehicle, then drove slowly in the direction of the physician's office which was at some little distance and on another street.

Eva watched them until they passed out of sight, then went back into the house, her heart and soul filled with indignation. The more she thought of

the dastardly cruelty of the man the angrier she grew. At last she heard the sound of wagon wheels, and going to the door, looked out.

Dan Bruler had driven into the yard and was unhitching the horse from the wagon. Soon he came in. At sight of him there came over Eva a strong desire to knock him senseless. She looked at him with eyes in which burned all the scorn and hatred she felt for him. He strode through the room and going to the stairway called Mrs. Bruler. There was, of course, no answer. Turning to Eva he asked why Mrs. Bruler did not answer.

"She is not here," replied Eva coldly.

"Not here?" he repeated, staring at her and comprehending by her expression that she knew all. "Where is she?" he demanded with an oath.

A spirit of revenge took possession of Eva. She remembered how intensely this man hated Ely Nayburn. She determined to torment him in woman fashion.

"The last I saw of her she was going up the road in the buggy with Mr. Nayburn," she said icily. "I can't tell you where they have gone. That is—I mean—I won't tell you.

He uttered a fierce oath and took two strides to the door. "Which way did they go?" he demanded, almost choking with rage.

"The last I saw of them they were headed in the direction of Meadowville," she replied, enjoying his discomfiture.

"Run away! By ——!" he burst out, "but it aint

too late to catch them yet." He dashed out of the house and ran down the street to the house of Ely Nayburn.

Bursting into that abode, without rapping, he found Cindy in the kitchen. "Did you know your man and my woman have gone away in your buggy in the direction of Meadowville?" he shouted.

"Lord of mercy!" cried Cindy. "What for?

"What would it be for if not to run away from us? I'm goin' to put my horse onto my buggy and see if I can't overtake 'em. They hain't been gone long."

He dashed out again and ran toward home. Eva saw him enter the barn and draw out the buggy, and back the horse between the thills with feverish haste. He had just got everything ready for starting when Cindy came panting and puffing into the yard. "Take me with you!" she cried. "I want to go. I'll pull every hair out of Ely Nayburn's head. You see if I don't."

"Climb in then," said Dan Bruler, and Cindy "climbed in."

Giving the horse a cut with the whip, they dashed up the road in the direction of Meadowville. Eva smiled as she watched them from a window. It was again raining heavily.

"They will have a nice ride through all this rain and mud, and they say the roads are awful, and washed out in places," she soliloquised. "I am sorry for the poor horse. I half wish I had not told him that. I never thought he would go

after them or I wouldn't have done it, out of pity for the horse. I am not sorry for Dan Bruler though. I hope he will get into the mud all over. And as for Mrs. Nayburn—she drove me out in a fearful storm regardless of what might happen to me, and in the night too. I don't pity her either. I should think this cold wind and rain would cool their rage if anything would."

CHAPTER XXI.

In about an hour Mrs Bruler returned, feeling much better. Dr. Rhine had done everything possible for her comfort. She came in looking so much more like her old self that Eva's spirits rose joyously. She decided not to say anything at present about what had transpired during Mrs. Bruler's absence. She had said what she did to Dan Bruler upon the impulse of the moment, and without any thought other than to cause him a pang of jealousy. She smiled whenever she thought how they had looked as they went up the road, and she expected they would see the folly of pursuit and turn back, but as time passed and they did not come she made up her mind that they intended to go on to Meadowville and satisfy themselves as to whether Mr. Nayburn and Mrs. Bruler had gone there.

One thing which had convinced Dan Bruler that his much abused wife had run away was the fact that Meadowville was the nearest railroad station. That had not occurred to Eva at first, but now she thought of it, and as they did not return she concluded that they meant to go to the depot and find out if anyone answering Mrs. Bruler's des-

cription had bought a ticket, or been seen taking a train at that place. If they had gone to Meadowville they would not be back until late in the evening, perhaps midnight, for it was ten miles to that place, so it would be a twenty mile drive. The rains which had fallen almost incessantly for the past two weeks had flooded the streams and covered the low lands with water until driving was anything but a pleasure.

"Has Dan been in since I went to the doctor's?" asked Mrs. Bruler at length.

"Yes," replied Eva, "he came in and called you but when you did not answer he asked me where you were and I told him you had gone out in Mr. Nayburn's buggy."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Bruler, beginning to tremble, "was he angry?"

"He did not appear to like it very well," said Eva.

"Did you tell him I went to the doctor's?"

"No, I merely told him the direction in which you started. He asked me which way you went, and I told him. He might as well hear it then, as to find it out from some one else later. Not long after that he hitched the horse into the buggy and drove away in the same direction, and passed where you turned off."

"Oh," faltered Mrs. Bruler. "I'm afraid he will be dreadfully angry with me. I dread his coming home."

"Don't you fear him at all," said Eva. "I will stay with you, and he shall not abuse you if I

have to call out the whole village to protect you. Now go to bed and I will make you some tea and toast and bring it up to you. Do not get nervous for I will see that everything is all right. I will not leave you alone in the house one minute."

Mrs. Bruler thanked her and after she was comfortable in bed and had had her tea and toast, Eva told her of the remarkable things which had happened to herself.

Mrs. Bruler listened in amazement, and her astonishment was only equaled by her joy at Eva's good fortune.

"I remember the tragedy that left your old home desolate," she said, "but how little I dreamed that I was being honored by the presence in my humble home of the lost heiress of Arcadia. Everyone in this village supposed that the little girl was killed by that Gypsy woman, and when your old nurse, Mrs Prayton, said that she believed you were living because she had seen your mother in her dreams and she had told her so, the people here, and even her own husband, thought she had brooded over her loss until her mind had become unhinged on that subject. She never liked the village people very well. They were not high-toned enough for her, and she took no pains to conceal her dislike. She never would go among them or associate with them. She held herself aloof and would hardly speak to any of us unless it was about business."

"But she has expressed a desire to get acquainted with you," said Eva. "Since I told her how good

you were to me when Mrs. Jones sent me away, she says she would like to know you."

Mrs. Bruler smiled. She was thinking how Mrs. Jones would regret her harshness to Eva when she found that the girl was the lost heiress of the Graylands.

"She would not have been so particular as to whether Eva became converted or not, and Eddie could have taken his whipping from the heiress with much better grace than from a homeless and penniless outcast," she thought, and the situation caused her to laugh outright. Eva looked at her in surprise. "I was only thinking, my dear," said Mrs. Bruler, "how much more willing Mrs. Jones would be to have Eddie punished by the heiress of Arcadia than by plain little Eva Dumond. That's all."

As evening came and Dan Bruler did not return his wife concluded that he had gone on another one of his periodical sprees. He was almost sure to do so after he had been unusually brutal to her. She told Eva that she should not be surprised if he did not come home for two or three days, as he often remained away that long and sometimes much longer, as he had when he had the tremens.

Eva kept her own counsel so far as his taking Mrs. Nayburn with him, and Mrs. Bruler asked her to stay with her all night, to which she consented, for she knew if he came home in a rage he would not dare treat his wife with personal violence if she was in the house. She knew that Mrs. Prayton would not be uneasy about her,

for she had told her when she came away that she might stay all night with Mrs. Bruler.

They retired at ten oclock and the night wore away and still he did not come. When morning came Mrs. Bruler pronounced herself so much recovered as to feel almost well. She still kept a bandage about her throat, and wet it occasionally with a soothing lotion which Dr. Rhine had given her, but she arose and went about her household duties as usual.

"I am sure he has gone on one of his sprees," she said to Eva. "Stay with me as long as you can, won't you?"

About noon a man came to the door and rapped. Mrs. Bruler opened the door.

"Does Dan Bruler live here?" asked the man.

"He does," she replied, "but he is not at home at present."

"Well, I live on the road to Meadowville, more'n half way from here, and this mornin' I found a horse and a broken buggy under one of my sheds a little piece from my house. The horse had dragged the buggy, broken as it was, into my lot, and went under the shed for shelter, and I don't believe anybody guided him there. I think he turned in there of his own accord. The horse was all right; that is he didn't seem to be injured any, but there was some marks of the whip on him. I put him in my barn and fixed him up comfortable, and then I started out to see who had met with an accident. I went and looked at the buggy tracks where they turned in, and I see they come

from this way. I went along the road till I come to Mill Creek and I see the bridge was broke down and the water rushin' through it. The creek is ragin' now since all the rain, and I was afraid somebody had gone through the bridge. The buggy tracks turned off before I got to the creek and I followed 'em and see they had come up the bank a little ways below the bridge on the side where I was, which would be the other side from here. I could see where the horse had struggled up the bank draggin' the buggy after him. He must have gone down when the bridge broke away and been carried down the creek a little ways an' then got his feet on the bottom enough to give him a chance to get up onto the bank. The current is narrow but it's terrible swift in the middle of the stream. I went back an' notified some of my neighbors an' we made a search but we haven't found nobody; but one man said he knew the horse and buggy was Dan Bruler's, an' so I come around by the other road a purpose to tell you about it."

Mrs. Bruler turned pale and began to tremble and Eva went to her and put her arm around her.

"Come in," she said to the man, and she placed a chair for him.

He noticed Mrs. Bruler's agitation and said sympathetically, "I wouldn't be scared for there might not have been anybody in the buggy when it went through the bridge. He might have got out somewhere and the horse might have gone on of its own accord."

"No! no!" she said. "He did not come home last night and I am afraid he is drowned. I did not know when he started from home, for I was out at the time, but I'm afraid he was in the buggy when it went through the bridge and that the current swept him away. Don't you remember when the floods washed out that bridge four years ago, and Mr. Cale went through and he and his horse were both drowned?"

"I remember," replied the man. "I ought to, for I helped take him out of the water. I'll go right back an' get up a searching party, and we will go down the creek an' see if we can discover anything. In the meantime if he should turn up all right, you let us know."

He went out and entering his buggy drove away.

The news traveled fast, as such news always does, and men from Greendell joined in the search. Toward the close of the afternoon a man appeared who had just heard the news, and declared that he had met Dan Bruler the day before, on that road, not more than two miles from the bridge in question, and with a woman in his buggy, who "looked for all the world like Cindy Nayburn."

When Ely heard that he hastily joined the searchers. He had thought nothing of his wife's absence, because she had often taken offense at something he had said or done, and gone away from home and staid all night to punish him.

Once she had remained away two nights; therefore when she had not come home on the night after he took Mrs. Bruler to the doctor, he had

given himself no uneasiness, whatever, for he supposed that she was punishing him again for some fancied wrong.

When he heard this man's statement, the mystery grew deeper, for why should she be driving with Dan Bruler, on the road to Meadowville? It was perfectly inexplicable why those two persons should be travelling together.

When Eva was questioned in regard to his departure from home, she stated that just as he was about ready she saw a woman come up and enter the buggy, and saw them start off, but as it was a common courtesy among the village and country people to take one of their neighbors in to ride with them if they happened to have business in the same direction she had thought nothing strange of that.

All the remainder of that day the searching party dragged the creek, and just at nightfall their efforts were rewarded. The two bodies were found in the mill-dam, a mile below the bridge, where they had been carried by the swift current. Cindy's arms were clasped tightly about Dan Bruler's neck, and her fingers clutched his clothing in the grip of death. The best of swimmers could not have saved himself, encumbered as he was.

"She must have grabbed right onto him when the buggy fell into the creek," said one man. "He didn't have no chance."

"I guess if he hadn't drownded she'd have strangled him with that grip of her's afore he could 'a' got loose," said another.

The two bodies were brought to their homes and prepared for burial. The whole village turned out to the funerals, and it was the cause of wonder and gossip for weeks. All sorts of stories were set afloat concerning them. One old lady was heard to remark that "of all the men fer miles around she should think Dan Bruler would have been the last one that any woman would elope with."

Eva was somewhat shocked at the violent death which the two had met, but her heart was very light whenever she thought of Mrs. Bruler, and how calm and peaceful her life would be now that she was rid of the tyrant who had made her every hour unhappy. And now according to her aunt's will she would come into her little fortune of six thousand dollars. When Eva thought of that her heart throbbed with joy.

"I am glad the horse was saved," she thought, "for he is worth much more than the man; and if I were in her place I should rejoice to think I was free from that wretch forever."

Mrs. Bruler bore herself with dignity and good sense through it all. She would not pretend to a grief she could not feel. She gave him a decent burial and neither wept or mourned, but went about her duties with a grave face and subdued manner. She said very little, but what she did say was neither hypocritical or offensive.

Ely Nayburn behaved in much the same manner. He felt shocked at the violent death which his wife had suffered, but in spite of his desire to suppress disloyal thoughts, there was a voice in his heart which sang, "free"—"free."

CHAPTER XXII.

Three years have passed and Eva has seen her eighteenth birthday. She has spent those three years to great advantage. She is now through with her school days, and has come out to take her place in the world. She came from school directly to the Erlwin mansion, for Jessamine insisted that she should spend some time with her before going to her own home, which had been restored to all its former beauty. The nurse declared it was even finer than before, and as none of them had ever seen it in the days of its former glory, they were not in a position to dispute her word. All had been done that money could do to make it perfect, and Eva declared that she had never dreamed of anything so beautiful, when they went out there one day to visit it.

All the treasures in marble, tapestry, paintings, inlaid furniture, silver and china, had been restored to their former places. A new stable had been built, capable of accommodating twenty horses. The fish pond had been restored, and all the rustic seats and arbors. The lawns were like velvet, the flower garden filled with everything desirable, and Mrs. Prayton, beaming with delight, had

shown them with pride and joy, every nook and corner of the grand old place.

"It is rightly named," said Eva, "for the original Arcadia could not have been lovelier or more restful and heavenly than this."

"It is perfect," declared Jessamine. "You ought to be proud of such an inheritance. And your fortune turned out to be even greater than Ernest supposed, for you have a million left, now, after all the expense of restoring this."

Jessamine's marriage to Ernest Grayland was now but a few weeks distant. The three years had brought her to the age her father required her to be before entering the marriage state. These years had only made the lovers more devoted to each other, and now they were soon to be rewarded for their constancy.

Eva had learned much in these three years. She had learned that Fanchette's view of marriage was not shared by the majority. She also learned that a woman who lives such a life as Fanchette had lived was shunned and avoided by the majority. But that knowledge had only made her heart more tender toward the friend and protector of her childhood. If Fanchette had been denounced as vile, and persecuted by all the world, Eva would have risen up in her defense in the face of all odds.

It was characteristic of her race, the Graylands, to side with the weaker and more defenseless; to aid the persecuted, and remain loyal to one who had been faithful and devoted to them. This trait of character Eva had inherited in the highest degree.

Every vacation she had from school she had divided between Fanchette and Mrs. Prayton. As she grew more worldly-wise, she realized more what Fanchette had suffered to cause her to become reckless and abandoned. Her pity for her grew greater. At times the scenes of her childhood rose up before her, and tears would fill her eyes at the remembrance of Fanchette's tenderness to her. She also began to realize what her care and support had cost her, and she felt that it was little enough for her to do in return, to make Fanchette's life peaceful and happy for the remainder of her days.

Dick, also, had been sent to school, and Ernest Grayland had made him his special charge. Dick had remained with Mr. and Mrs. Brown for a few months, and then Ernest had insisted that he give himself into his care, to be educated and fitted for a business life, and Dick had been only too thankful to do so.

When Dick was placed in school, Tom Lexington went with him, for the two boys were great friends.

Curley remained with Mr. Brown, who grew very fond of the little dog, and when Eva was out on a vacation she always went to see him. Her kitten was now a fine, large cat, and the pride of Mrs. Prayton who had taken it to care for when Eva went away to school.

One evening a few days before Eva was to go to her own home they were all assembled in the library of the Erlwin mansion. Jessamine's Aunt Anna, Mr. Erlwin, Ernest Grayland, Jessamine and

Eva were there. They had been discussing the question of servants for Arcadia. "You will install Mrs. Prayton as housekeeper, I suppose?" said Jessamine's aunt. "But really, Eva, my child, you ought to have some female relative to live with you. It is hardly suitable for you to live alone with your servants, even with your devoted Mrs. Prayton as companion. It is extremely unfortunate that you have no middle-aged relative who could make her home with you."

"Oh, I will not need anyone beside Fanchette," replied Eva. "She is middle-aged, and she will do as well as anyone. With Mrs. Prayton and Fanchette I shall do very well."

There was an ominous silence. The rest of the little company looked at each other in amazement. That Eva would take Fanchette into her own home they had never dreamed. They thought that Fanchette had been abundantly provided for. She had been given an allowance, and was living in comfortable rooms in a respectable part of the city, and had been conducting herself in an irreproachable manner during the three years gone by. But that Eva should take her home with her was in their eyes preposterous. At last Jessamine's aunt broke the silence which had fallen upon them after that startling declaration.

"My dear child," she said, in accents of mild horror, "you will never think seriously of taking that woman into your own home, I hope."

"Why?" she demanded, so suddenly that her questioner looked startled.

"My dear Eva," said that lady in a deprecating tone, "the woman is not a fit companion for you. Do you forget what her past life has been? She is not good enough to become an inmate of your own home—a trusted companion."

Eva turned and regarded her calmly, her blue eyes growing dark. Then she raised her head with the haughty air of her race, and turning her face toward the rest of the group, whose silence expressed as plainly as words, their disapproval, she said in a low, clear voice which penetrated to every corner of the room:

"No, I do not forget what her past life has been. Neither do I forget that I was fed and clothed for years with the money which was paid to poor Fanchette as the price of her degradation. If she had not been burdened with me, a helpless infant, she might never have fallen into evil ways."

"But she tried to teach you to live the same kind of life. I don't see how you can overlook that."

"Fanchette was perfectly sincere in her teachings," said Eva, "for she had become embittered toward all men through her own experience in married life as well as single life. She had come to believe that men were mere selfish animals, actuated only by a wish to gratify their own selfishness in all ways, regardless of the happiness or welfare of the women who contributed to their pleasures. She thought, that being the case, that women should retaliate by treating the men in much the same way, in getting money from them

with which to buy creature comforts, and at the same time avoiding any legal bonds or obligations. Can you not see how one who has had such an experience as Fanchette's might come to see things in that light?"

"I don't see how you can expect me, a good churchwoman, and as I hope, a Christian, to see things in any such light. I know that the woman is not good enough to touch the hem of your garments. You know she is not good enough to live with you."

"I will be the judge of that," replied Eva. "If Fanchette was good enough to care for me in my helpless infancy, if she was good enough to hold me in her arms and rock me to sleep, to spend her money for doctors for me, and attend me in all my baby ills, to feed me, to clothe me, shelter me, and soothe and comfort all my little troubles and childish griefs, she is good enough to live with me now, and share my home and all my good fortune. I will try to make her life so bright, henceforth, that she will forget the hideous past. Fanchette shall live with me in Arcadia."

There was silence in the room for a few moments after she ceased speaking, then Mr. Erlwin leaned over the back of Jessamine's chair and said in a low voice: "'This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.'"

Jessamine turned with an angelic smile, then rising, she went to Eva and put her arms around her.

"Eva is right," she said, "and has shown more

of a Christian spirit than any one of us. All honor to her for it."

Ernest placed his hand caressingly on Eva's head.

"She is a true Grayland," he said proudly. "I have never known a member of our family who was ever guilty of the baseness of ingratitude."

Eva turned to him with a dazzling smile. "It would be ingratitude of the basest description, wouldn't it?" she said. "But," turning to Jessamine and placing an arm about her, "you mistake, my dear, when you call me a Christian. To be a real Christian one must follow Christ's teachings to the letter, and how many persons are there who thoughtlessly declare themselves Christians who ever stop to consider what it implies? Charity for all, even the most vicious, and vile. How many of us have that? Forgiveness to all those who injure us, and love to our enemies. We have no such divine patience as that. At least I know I haven't. Christ forgave his enemies even while He was undergoing torture at their hands. Would anyone of us do that? No, indeed. We would be wishing that we might get hold of a good revolver so that we might give our tormentors as good as they gave us. And yet if you were to ask almost anyone now-a-days—no matter how full of spite and selfishness and uncharitableness they were—if they were a Christian, they would say, 'Why of course I am. Did you think I was a heathen?'"

Jessamine's aunt winced. "But you will probably

marry, some day, Eva," she said, "and your husband may not view Fanchette's presence in your home in the same light that you do. What then?"

"Oh, yes he will," said Eva joyfully, "for I am going to marry Dick—dear old Dick. We settled all that yesterday. He has always liked Fanchette. He ought to for she was very kind to him and has often fed him when he was hungry and she knew his 'old gent' was away on one of his sprees. Dick is all right. I think I have loved him ever since I have known him, only I did not realize it until I came back from school and saw how handsome he had grown. Then more than that, he is the only man I could trust."

They all smiled.

"One would think you were world-wise and world-weary," said Ernest. "I am glad my little cousin has grown so shrewd. But Dick is a good boy and you might do much worse. May I ask when the interesting event is to occur?"

"Oh, not for ever so long. Not until we are older. We are going to wait—that is I am—quite a while yet. And if I wait, he will have to, for he can't marry till I am ready."

"What do you suppose society and people in general will say if they find out about Fanchette?" asked Jessamine's aunt. "Do you think they will visit you and be passive in regard to her? That they will shut their eyes to her very questionable past? Think of that, my dear."

"Oh, they will as long as I have plenty of money," she replied, "and without that they

would not come anyway. That was another thing I learned while I was among the girls at school. That money is really all that counts in the opinion of fashionable society. If one has money they know one. If one has not, they don't, and there you are."

Ernest and Jessamine could control their amusement no longer and they laughed till the room rang. Mr. Erlwin also quietly laughed.

"You will have to own that you are beaten in a fair argument, Aunt Anna," said Jessamine. "Everything indicates that little Eva has acquired much worldly wisdom within the last three years. She will do very nicely."

"But," said Eva, "my happiness does not depend upon the approval of fashionable society. I want only those who truly care for me. I shall be happy and satisfied to live with Dick and Fanchette and my old nurse in Arcadia. Fashionable society may come or stay away as they choose. Nature will ever have more charms for me than the hypocritical and empty compliments of fashionable society."

When informed of Eva's decision in regard to her future, Fanchette wept, but they were tears of joy. She had been a victim of conflicting hopes and fears ever since the young girl had been away to school, and when in the vacations she never failed to come and see her, Fanchette began to hope that the education which Eva would acquire through contact with the world would not entirely alienate her affections from the guardian of her

childhood. But to be allowed to live in a beautiful home like Arcadia, with her idolized Eva as her constant companion, was far more happiness than she had dared to hope for.

"I might have known that nothing could change her faithful heart," she said. "I ought to have known her better than to think that contact with the world would spoil her. I wronged her even to doubt her. But it will be a heaven for me. She is placing me in Paradise."

Three years later if anyone had passed through Greendell on a tour of inspection he would have seen the old haunted house with its grounds transformed into a veritable Eden. It was fittingly named Arcadia. The lawns were restored to all their former velvety beauty. The summer houses and rustic arbors, the fish-pond, the grotto; all the wonderful nooks and retreats were restored. Flowers bloomed on every side, statues gleamed and fountains splashed amid the shrubbery, and the gravel walks and drives went winding about through this fairyland up to the great house which had, under the hands of skilled workmen, been brought as near a state of perfection as was possible.

All the treasures in art, and all the furnishings which Mrs. Prayton had guarded so zealously were in their old places, and many new ones added.

It had been Eva's expressed desire that the interior should be made to look as nearly like what it had been in her parents' time as was possible, and good Mrs. Prayton was delighted. She had made it her especial study; therefore, all she could replace in their old position she had arranged to look as nearly as possible as they did of yore, and Eva expressed herself delighted.

Jessamine had feared a rivalry between Mrs. Prayton and Fanchette which would result in jealousy and discord, but nothing of the kind occurred.

Mrs. Prayton was never made acquainted with the facts in regard to Fanchette's unfortunate past and therefore she had nothing to criticize. She pronounced herself deeply grateful to Fanchette for her care of Eva, and particularly for her having reared her in comfort, and never having allowed her to become a working girl.

"You must have had to deny yourself many things which you really wanted in order to provide for her so generously, when you were only in moderate circumstances, for a child makes much expense," she said, and Fanchette replied, "I loved Eva and never grudged her anything. She was my only treasure." And that speech won for her Mrs. Prayton's everlasting good will.

Eva and Dick were married not long after

Ernest and Jessamine, and just previous to the departure of the two last named for an extended trip to Egypt and through Europe, expecting to be away two years.

In the little village of Greendell there has not been much change. Mrs. Jones is miserable and unhappy, and leans heavily upon the Rev. Mr. Pheelbad for sympathy and consolation, for her idol, her darling Eddie, has been sent to a reform school for stealing, and she is disconsolate on that account. It is in vain that the minister tells her that "this is her cross" and she "must bear it with Christian fortitude." She constantly bewails the cruelty of the village people to her innocent boy, and looks upon him as a martyr to injustice and unfeeling heartlessness.

"If he had not been in bad company," she wails, "he would not now be where he is. It is all their fault."

The home of Ely Nayburn is now presided over by a new mistress, and Ely's face beams with content and satisfaction. He has married Mrs. Bruler, and their home is full of the sweet peace and harmony which these two souls know how to appreciate after their former matrimonial experience.

Old Mr. and Mrs. Brown have fallen heir to a small legacy which provides for all their needs, and will make them comfortable in their declining years.

Cecil still lives at the farm and heartily hates it and everything connected with it.

Tom has a good position in the city, which was

procured for him by Ernest Grayland, and he promises Cecil that as soon as he can get promoted and an increase in salary accordingly, he will have her come to the city and live with him in a flat, and that is the brightest prospect to which she looks forward.

Curley is getting old now, and the kitten has grown to be a dignified cat, but the two are the best of friends, as they lie sleeping in the sunshine, or frolic through the shady walks and over the velvety lawns in the beautiful grounds.

No more will the grand old place be shadowed by the grim suspicion of harboring ghostly occupants, for Mrs. Prayton has confessed that she and she alone was the familiar spirit which gave the house its gruesome title. In order to protect it from vandals, and keep it for her beloved Eva, she had frightened the intruders with the help of phosphorus and stage thunder and lightning. More than once she had rubbed phosphorus on the frame of the portrait which hung above the fireplace, when she saw a party of boys approaching the house. She had dressed herself in white and stood in the window where she could be seen by passers-by, and she had enacted the scene of the tragedy by a pistol shot, a cry, a fall and the hurrying footsteps in the upper rooms when she knew there were intruders in the rooms below.

The village people are much pleased with the way things have terminated, and are proud of having such a place within the borderline of Greendell. And while goodwill and friendship prevail among

them for the occupants thereof, the lives of those occupants are ideal, for love, harmony and happiness reign supreme, and the white wings of perfect peace overshadow those who dwell in the little earthly paradise they call Arcadia.

THE END.

JUL 23 1906